

Sermons and Oracles of Consolation Following the Fall of Jerusalem, 33:1-39:29

The Watchman Who Gives Warning, Thereby Fulfilling His Responsibility--

A Summary of Ezekiel's Task as YHWH's Prophet (33:1-20)

33:1 And YHWH's word was / came to me, saying: 33:2 Son of Adam / Humanity, speak to your people's children; and you shall say to them, A land upon which I will bring a sword--and the people of the land shall take one man from their ends / extremities, and they will make him for a watchman for them. 33:3 And he will see the sword coming over / against the land; and he shall blow on the ram's horn, and he shall warn the people. 33:4 And the one listening heard the sound of the ram's horn, and did not take warning; and the sword came and it took him-- his blood will be on his (own) head. 33:5 He heard the sound of the ram's horn, and did not take warning--his blood shall be on him. And he (who) took warning, he delivered / saved his life. 33:6 And the watchman who sees the sword coming, and did not blow on the ram's horn, and the people was not warned, and a sword came and took life from them, he in his guilt was taken, and his blood, from (the) hand of the watchman, I will seek. 33:7 And you, Son of Adam / Humanity, I have placed you (as) a watchman for Israel's household; and you shall hear from My mouth a Word; and you shall warn them from Me. 33:8 When I speak to the wicked person, Wicked person, you shall surely die! And you did not speak to warn (the) wicked person of his way, he (is) a wicked person; for the iniquity / guilt of his he shall die. But / and his blood I will seek from your hand! 33:9 And you, if you warned a wicked person from his way, to turn from it, and he did not turn from his way, he in his guilt / iniquity shall die; and you, you delivered your innermost-being / life! 33:10 And you, Son of Adam / Humanity, speak to Israel's household. In this way you (2nd person plural) spoke, saying since our transgressions and our sins (are) over / against us; and in / by them we are rotting away--and how shall we live? 33:11 Say to them, (As) I live--(it is) a saying of my Lord YHWH--I do not desire (the) death of the wicked person! But rather (I desire that the) wicked person turn from his way, and will live! Turn! Turn from your (plural) evil ways! And for what reason will you (plural) die, household of Israel? 33:12 And you, Son of Adam / Humanity, say to your people's children, (The) righteousness of the righteous person will not deliver him in a day of his transgression; and (the) wickedness of the wicked person will not cause his stumbling by it, in a day of his turning from his wickedness. And a righteous person will not be able to live by it [his righteousness], in a day of his sinning! 33:13 When I say to the righteous, He shall surely live--and he trusted in his righteousness, and did injustice, all his righteousness will not be remembered, and in his injustice which he did, in / by it he will die! 33:14 And when I say to the wicked person, You shall surely die! And he turns from his sin, and does justice and righteousness: 33:15 a wicked person shall return a pledge; he shall restore anything stolen. By statutes of the life he walked in order to not do injustice; he shall surely live; he shall not die! 33:16 All his sins which he sinned will not be remembered to / against him; justice and righteousness he did--he shall surely live! 33:17 And your people's children will say, (The) way of my Lord is not regulated (correctly)! And they, their way is not regulated (correctly)! 33:18 When a righteous person turns from his righteousness, and does injustice, and shall die by them; 33:19 and when a wicked person turns from his wickedness, and does justice and righteousness, because of them he shall live. 33:20 And you

(plural) will say, My Lord's way is not regulated (correctly)! I will judge you people, each one according to his ways, house of Israel!

**Jerusalem's Fall Reported and Explained--
Which Becomes the Basis for a Radical Change in Ezekiel's Message
and in His Ability to Speak Freely to the People (33:21-33)**

33:21 And it happened in (the) twelfth year, in the tenth (month) on the fifth (day) of the month of our exile, the escapee from Jerusalem came to me, saying The city was struck down!
33:22 And YHWH's hand was upon me in the evening, before the escapee's coming; and He opened my mouth until coming to me in the morning; and He opened my mouth, and I was no longer silent. 33:23 And YHWH's word was / came to me, saying: 33:24 Son of Adam / Humanity, those inhabiting these ruins upon Israel's land are speaking, saying Abraham was one (person), and he inherited the land; and we, we have many (people); the land was given for a possession! 33:25 Therefore, say to them, In this was my Lord YHWH spoke: You people are eating upon the blood, and you are lifting your eyes to your idols, and you are shedding blood; and shall you inherit the land? 33:26 You (plural) stand / rely upon your sword; you made an abomination; and each one of you people are making your neighbor's wife unclean; and shall you inherit the land? 33:27 In this way you shall speak to them: In this way my Lord YHWH spoke: As I live, surely those in the ruins shall fall by the sword; and the one upon the field's surface, I will give to the wild animal(s) to eat him; and those in the strongholds / masadas and in the caves, by the pestilence will die! 33:28 And I will make the land a desolation and a waste; and its pride of strength will cease. And Israel's mountains will be devastated without anyone crossing over (them). 33:29 And they will know that I (am) YHWH, when I make the land a desolation and a waste, because of all their abominations which they made. 33:30 And you, Son of Adam / Humanity, your people's children, the ones speaking to one another about you--near the walls and in the doors of the houses--and he will speak, one to one, a man to his brother, saying, Come, now; and hear what the Word (is), the Oone coming forth from YHWH! 33:31 And they came to you, like a coming of a people, and My people sit in front of you; and they will hear your words; and / but they will not do them, because they are making lustful songs in their mouth(s); after their gain their heart / mind is walking / going. 33:32 And look at you--to them, (you are) like a song of lustfulness, a beautiful voice, and playing an instrument well; and they hear your words--but / and doing them, they are not! 33:33 And when it comes--look it is coming! And they will know that a prophet / prophet was in their midst!

Sermons and Oracles of Consolation Following the Fall of Jerusalem, 33:1-39:29¹⁷⁸⁷

1787

Reimer entitles **33:1-39:29** "After the Fall of Jerusalem." He comments that "Following the central collection of foreign-nation oracles [vision-stories], the focus returns to Judah (or 'the house of (continued...))

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¹⁷⁸⁷(...continued)

Israel' in Ezekiel's preferred phrase). Before Jerusalem's fall, warning and doom dominated Ezekiel's message--although hints of hope were not absent. In the wake of Jerusalem's destruction (**33:21-22**), the balance is reversed. With false hopes shattered, Ezekiel's oracles [vision-stories] now point to the true source and proper shape of life renewed. This reorientation is not an abrupt 'about face' but rather a gradual turning that revisits the realities of life under judgment while building toward the solid promise of a renewed and permanent relationship of life with [YHWH]." (P. 1552)

Hilmer comments that "Interspersed are words of warning and judgment (e.g. **33:23-29; 34:1-19; 35; 36:1-7**, some of which may have been intended to comfort a downtrodden people." (P. 1272)

Matties comments that "As **12:1-24:27** prepared for the destruction of Jerusalem, a consequence of Divine absence (**1:1-11:25**), so these chapters [33-39] prepare for the restoration of Divine Presence (**40:1-48:35**). **Chapter 33** stands as a hinge between the end of the old ways--of idolatrous Israel (**12:1-24:27**) and oppressive nations (**25:1-32:32**)--and the possibility of a new reality in which a renewed covenantal people break from their rebellious ways, become a moral community, and worship [YHWH] in righteousness and justice. Just as [YHWH] terminated the past, so also the future will be brought about by [YHWH's] new initiative. Preparing for a restoration of Divine Presence, **chapters 34-37** focus on Israel's transformation. **Chapters 38-39** prepare for the manifestation of [YHWH's] glory by depicting, in mythic terms, the elimination of any cosmic evil and imperial military power that might stand in [YHWH's] way." (Pp. 1204-05)

¹⁷⁸⁸

Rabbi Fisch comments on **chapter 33** that "With this chapter a new phase opens in Ezekiel's career. After announcing the doom of the heathen peoples, he reverts to the destiny of his own nation. But he no longer warns and threatens, because his predictions have become a tragic reality. He is now charged with the task of preparing the remnant of Israel for the coming restoration...As the root cause of Israel's calamity was sin, the prophet dwells again at length on its consequences, the responsibility which accompanies free will and the power of repentance..."

"He opens the chapter by defining his role as that of a watchman in wartime whose duty is to warn his people of the approaching enemy, and concludes it with the assurance that, since his earlier prophecies had been fulfilled, his words will not now be disregarded." (P. 221)

Compare the earlier mentions of this theme of the watchman in **chapters 3** and **18**. YHWH's deepest desire for his people is that they shall live--he does not want them to die. But he holds each individual responsible for turning around, for taking heed to the Divine warning issued by His prophet!

(continued...)

33:1 וַיְהִי דְבַר־יְהוָה אֵלַי לֵאמֹר:

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

33:2 בֶּן־אָדָם דַּבֵּר אֶל־בְּנֵי־עַמְּךָ

Son of Adam / Humanity, speak to your people's children;¹⁷⁸⁹

וְאָמַרְתָּ אֲלֵיהֶם

and you shall say to them,

¹⁷⁸⁸(...continued)

Reimer entitles **33:1-20** “Reminders.” He comments that “On the brink of hope, there is a brief pause to forge links back to **chapters 1-24**, and to remind Ezekiel and his audience of their mutual responsibilities: **33:1-9** again describes the role of the prophet in terms of the ‘watchman’ seen also in **3:16-21**; **33:10-20** offers a different edition of the teaching on individual responsibility seen in **18:21-29**.” (P. 1552)

Reimer entitles **33:1-9** “The Watchman (*Reprise*).” He comments “See also **3:16-21**. [YHWH], prophet, and people are inextricably bound together in these verses. The role of the watchman (**33:2, 6, 7**) dominates. He must act on what he sees (**verses 3, 6**). Yet **verse 2** frames the parable of **verses 2-6** about the land itself, and the whole oracle [vision-story] (**verses 2-9**) is addressed ‘to your people.’ They are responsible to attend to the watchman’s warnings (**verses 4-5**). The watchman must exercise vigilance to discern the actions of [YHWH] (‘If I bring the sword...and if he sees,’ **verses 2-3**), but YHWH Himself Speaks the Divine Word to the prophet (**verse 7**). **Verses 7-9** are almost identical to **3:17-19**.” (P. 1552)

Matties comments on **verses 1-6** that “The section begins by depicting a warfare scenario, in which the sentinel is chosen by the people and in which both are responsible for their actions.” (P. 1205)

¹⁷⁸⁹

Rabbi Fisch comments that “Having delivered several prophecies against heathen nations, Ezekiel is now charged with the task of speaking again to his people.” (P. 221)

Hilmer states that Ezekiel’s countrymen means “fellow Israelites in exile with Ezekiel.” We assume that his message would apply likewise to the Israelites still remaining in Jerusalem and Judah. What do you think?

אֶרֶץ כִּי־אָבִיא עֲלֶיהָ חֶרֶב

A land upon which I will bring a sword¹⁷⁹⁰

וְלָקְחוּ עִם־הָאָרֶץ אִישׁ אֶחָד מִקְצֵיהֶם

--and the people of the land shall take one man from their ends / extremities,¹⁷⁹¹

וְנָתְנוּ אֹתוֹ לָהֶם לְצִפְּהָ:

and they will make him for a watchman¹⁷⁹² for them.

33:3 וַיִּרְאֵה אֶת־הַחֶרֶב בָּאָה עַל־הָאָרֶץ

And he will see the sword coming over / against the land;

1790

Rabbi Fisch comments that “God determines the fate of a land, whether it should have peace or war.” (P. 221)

Reimer states, “On [YHWH’s] Own sword, compare **21:3**.” (P. 1552)

Hilmer simply states, the sword here means “the invading army.” (P. 1272)

1791

Rabbi Fisch states that the statement here is literally “from the end of them.” He comments that Ehrlich explains the word as meaning ‘from the most worthy of them’ and compares its use in **Genesis 47:2** [where Joseph picked five men from “the ends of his brothers”].” (P. 221)

Hilmer states that the people of the land means “Full citizens who owned land and served in the army (see **7:27; 12:19; 45:16, 22; 46:3**).” (P. 1272)

But how would this distinction apply to Israelites in captivity? They were no longer in the land where they had formerly owned land, and as captives they could no longer serve in Israel’s army. What do you think?

1792

Hilmer notes that the watchman is “a figure introduced in **chapter 3** and expanded on in **chapter 18**.” (P. 1272)

וְתִקַּע בַּשּׁוֹפָר

and he shall blow on the ram's horn,¹⁷⁹³

וְהִזְהִיר אֶת־הָעָם:

and he shall warn the people.

33:4 וְשָׁמַע הַשְּׂמִיעַ אֶת־קוֹל הַשּׁוֹפָר׃

And the one listening heard the sound of the ram's horn,

וְלֹא נִזְהָר

and did not take warning;

וַתָּבוֹא חֶרֶב וַתִּקַּח־הוּ

and the sword came and it took him—

דָּמּוֹ בְּרֹאשׁוֹ יִהְיֶה:

his blood will be on his (own) head.¹⁷⁹⁴

33:5 אֵת קוֹל הַשּׁוֹפָר שָׁמַע׃

He heard the sound of the ram's horn,

וְלֹא נִזְהָר

and did not take warning—

1793

Rabbi Fisch states that “The horn was sounded as a signal of alarm (compare **Amos 3:6**).” (P. 221)

Hilmer notes that the horn was “An instrument made from a ram's horn (**Joshua 6:4, 6, 13**), used to warn of approaching danger (**Nehemiah 4:18-20; Jeremiah 4:19; Amos 3:6**) and to announce the beginnings of religious periods (e.g., Day of Atonement, **Leviticus 25:9**; New Moon festival, **Psalm 81:3**).” (P. 1272)

1794

Rabbi Fisch comments that “He is responsible for his death and no blame attaches to the watchman whose warning was ignored.” (P. 221)

דָּמוֹ בּוֹ יִהְיֶה

his blood shall be on him.

וְהוּא נִזְהָר

And he (who) took warning,

נִפְשׁוֹ מִלָּט:

he delivered / saved his life.

33:6 וְהַצִּפָּה כִּי־יִרְאֶה אֶת־הַחֶרֶב בָּאָה

And the watchman who sees the sword coming,

וְלֹא־תִקַּע בְּשׁוֹפָר

and did not blow on the ram's horn,

וְהָעָם לֹא־נִזְהָר

and the people was not warned,

וַתָּבוֹא חֶרֶב וַתִּקַּח מֵהֶם נַפְשׁ

and a sword came and took life from them,

הוּא בְּעוֹנוֹ נִלְקָח

he in his guilt was taken,¹⁷⁹⁵

וְדָמוֹ מִיַּד־הַצִּפָּה אֶדְרֹשׁ:

and his blood, from (the) hand of the watchman, I will seek.

33:7¹⁷⁹⁶

1795

Rabbi Fisch comments that “Though he was worthy of death on account of his sins, nevertheless the watchman who had failed in his duty is held guilty by God of that man’s violent end.” (P. 222)

1796

Matties comments on **verses 7-9** that “The section ends by focusing on the task of the sentinel. Whereas **3:16-21** offered hope to the wicked who might turn around, **verses 7-9** indicate only death as (continued...) ”

וְאַתָּה בֶן־אָדָם

And you, Son of Adam / Humanity,¹⁷⁹⁷

צִפֵּה נִתְתִּיךָ לְבֵית יִשְׂרָאֵל

I have placed you (as) a watchman for Israel's household;¹⁷⁹⁸

וְשָׁמַעַת מִפִּי דְבָר

and you shall hear from My Mouth a Word;

וְהִזְהַרְתָּ אֹתָם מִמֶּנִּי:

and you shall warn them from Me.¹⁷⁹⁹

33:8 בְּאִמְרֵי לְרָשָׁע

When I speak to the wicked person,

רָשָׁע מוֹת תָּמוּת

Wicked person, you shall surely die!

¹⁷⁹⁶(...continued)

the fate of the wicked. Perhaps it is already too late for Jerusalem. Will it be too late for the exiles?

¹⁷⁹⁷

Rabbi Fisch quotes Lofthouse as saying “There is great dramatic force in this sudden application of the rule to the prophet.” (P. 222)

¹⁷⁹⁸

Hilmer states that the household of Israel means “both the nation and the individuals.” (P. 1272)

¹⁷⁹⁹

Rabbi Fisch comments that “The prophet’s duty is comparable to that of a watchman. He must warn Israel of the danger which results from unrepented sin.” (P. 222)

The Greek translation (**Rahlfs**) only has καὶ ἀκούσῃ ἐκ στόματός μου λόγον, “and you shall hear a Word out of My mouth,” omitting any mention of warning the people. However, in the next verse it is made clear that the watchman must speak warning to the people, specifically to the one disobeying the Divine Law.

וְלֹא דִבַּרְתָּ לְהַזְהִיר רָשָׁע מִדַּרְכּוֹ

And you did not speak to warn (the) wicked person of his way,

הוּא רָשָׁע

he (is) a wicked person;

בְּעוֹנוֹ יָמוּת

for the iniquity / guilt of his he shall die.

וְדָמוֹ מִיָּדְךָ אֶבְקֹשׁ:

But / and his blood I will seek from your hand!

33:9 וְאַתָּה כִּי־הַזְהַרְתָּ רָשָׁע מִדַּרְכּוֹ

And you, if you warned a wicked person from his way,

לָשׁוּב מִמֶּנָּה

to turn from it,

וְלֹא־שָׁב מִדַּרְכּוֹ הוּא

and he did not turn from his way,

בְּעוֹנוֹ יָמוּת

he in his guilt / iniquity shall die;

וְאַתָּה נַפְשְׁךָ הִצַּלְתָּ:

and /but you, you delivered your innermost-being / life!¹⁸⁰⁰

33:10¹⁸⁰¹

1800

Rabbi Fisch comments that “Ezekiel is then not held responsible, and being free from guilt will not be punished by God.” (P. 222)

1801

Rabbi Fisch entitles **verses 10-20** “Answer to the People’s Despair.”

(continued...)

וְאַתָּה בֶן-אָדָם

And you, Son of Adam / Humanity,

אָמַר אֶל-בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל

speak to Israel's household.

כֵּן אָמַרְתֶּם לְאָמַר

In this way you (2nd person plural) spoke,¹⁸⁰² saying

כִּי-פִשְׁעֵינוּ וְחַטָּאתֵינוּ עָלֵינוּ

since our transgressions and our sins (are) over / against us;

וּבָם אֲנַחְנוּ נִמְקִים

and in / by them we are rotting away—¹⁸⁰³

¹⁸⁰¹(...continued)

Reimer entitles them “Moral Responsibility (*Reprise*).” He comments that “As the reminders continue, the emphasis falls on the people. This passage parallels that of **18:19-29**...which concluded with a call to repentance (**18:30-32**). Here no such call is issued. But the following oracle (vision-story) represents the most important juncture in the prophet's ministry.” (P. 1553)

Matties comments that “A question attributed to the people reflects a demoralized and hopeless community that acknowledges its own sinfulness and fears for its own survival (**verse 10**). Three uses of ‘turn’ (**verse 11**) highlight both [YHWH's] desire for life (see also **18:23, 32**) and human responsibility to change behavioral patterns (see also **18:14-27**). **Verses 11** and **16** emphasize [YHWH's] preference for life.

¹⁸⁰²

Rabbi Fisch notes that “Kimchi renders: ‘rightly do you say’ giving *ken* the meaning it has in **Numbers 27:7** and elsewhere. Your despondency is justified only as long as you cleave to your sins.” (P. 223)

¹⁸⁰³

Hilmer comments that this is “the first time the exiles expressed consciousness of sin. Previously they had blamed their fathers (**18:2** [‘the fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge’]) and even [YHWH] (**18:19, 25** [the people claim YHWH's ways are not just]).” (P. 1272)

(continued...)

וַאִיךָ נִחְיֶה:

and how shall we live?¹⁸⁰⁴

33:11 אָמַר אֲלֵיהֶם

Say to them,

חַי־אֲנִי

(As) I live—

נֹאמַם אֲדַנִּי יְהוָה

(it is) a saying of my Lord YHWH—

¹⁸⁰³(...continued)

Yes, it's the same old "blame game." Not us—it's out fathers! No, not us, it's YHWH!

Darr comments that "Here, for the first time, Ezekiel's audience finally acknowledges its culpability...The exiles have missed the mark, abrogated God's covenant requirements, and are feeling the burden of their wrongdoing and its consequent punishment. Indeed, they claim to be 'wasting away'... So demoralized are the deportees by their crushing sense of sin and hopelessness that they even ask, 'How then shall we survive?' Yahweh responds to their complaint and query with an oath, by God's Own Life, that the Lord takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but in their turning from their ways (repenting) and living!...An impassioned plea ('Turn back, turn back, from your evil ways') ends with a question of God's Own: 'for why will you die, O house of Israel?' (quoting **18:31**).” (Pp. 299-300)

1804

Rabbi Fisch's translation has "how then can we live?" He comments that "They now realized that their evil ways were the cause of their calamities, but they had not yet grasped the sublime doctrine that sincere repentance can expunge the punishment of sin." (P. 223)

We say, Separated from the temple with its Levitical animal sacrifices, understood to be YHWH's way of forgiving the sins of the Israelites, how can these Israelite exiles expect to be forgiven of the sins that have caused them to be brought into captivity? They are obviously guilty before YHWH—how then can they be forgiven and live before YHWH? Ezekiel tells them can be forgiven without the Levitical animal sacrifices—simply by repentance, genuine repentance!

What do you think? Do you agree with Ezekiel? And where do you think Ezekiel got this revolutionary teaching? Straight from YHWH? Or had he learned it from his eating the **Scroll of Jeremiah**? We say Ezekiel could have learned it from reading the **Scroll of Isaiah**, where **chapters 40-55** proclaim full and free forgiveness to the exiles, without temple or animal sacrifice—but always with the demand for repentance. Do you agree?

אִם־אֶחְפֹּץ בְּמוֹת הַרְשָׁע

I do not desire (the) death of the wicked person!¹⁸⁰⁵

כִּי אִם־בְּשׁוּב רָשָׁע מִדַּרְכּוֹ

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

וַחַיָּה

and will live!

שׁוּבוּ שׁוּבוּ מִדַּרְכֵיכֶם הַרְעִים

Turn! Turn from your (plural) evil ways!¹⁸⁰⁶

1805

Rabbi Fisch comments that “Unlike man who punishes his enemy for the sake of revenge, [YHWH’s] purpose in chastening the wicked is to move them to penitence and so escape the full consequences of their guilt.” (P. 223)

Reimer comments that “The **Bible** is clear that [YHWH] will punish sin and vindicate His holiness and justice. At the same time, [YHWH] feels sorrow over the punishment and death of creatures in His image.” (P. 1553)

For this phrase “As I live” in the mouth of YHWH, see footnote 461. It is a “Divine oath.” Hilmer notes that “The question of **18:23** [‘Have I any pleasure in the death of the wicked?'] is now a statement. [YHWH’s] basic intention for His creation is life, not death!” (P. 1272)

Is that a part of your theology—that YHWH’s basic intention for His creation is life, not death? Or is it deeply rooted in your belief system that YHWH intends for a large part of His creation to die, not live? We say that YHWH certainly demands repentance from His creation, and that He punishes sin—harshly, constantly. But His intention in punishing is to call His creation to repentance. And what He wants is life, not death! We believe that this is the truth about YHWH; and it is the basis for our hope.

1806

Hilmer notes that this is “the third call for repentance.” (P. 1272) The earlier calls are found at

14:6, לָכֵן אָמַרְוּ אֶל־בַּיִת יִשְׂרָאֵל

Therefore, say to Israel’s house,

כֹּה אָמַר אֲדֹנָי יְהוִה

In this way my Lord YHWH spoke:

(continued...)

¹⁸⁰⁶(...continued)

שׁוּבוּ

Turn around / Repent!

וְהִשִּׁיבוּ מֵעַל גִּלּוּלֵיכֶם

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

וּמֵעַל כָּל־תּוֹעֲבֹתֵיכֶם

and from (trusting) upon all your abominations,

הִשִּׁיבוּ פְּנֵיכֶם:

turn around your face(s)! / change direction!

18:30, לְכֵן אִישׁ כַּדְרָכּוֹ אֲשַׁפֵּט אֶתְכֶם,

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

בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל

house of Israel—

נֵאֻם אֲדֹנָי יְהוִה

(it is) a saying of my Lord YHWH—

שׁוּבוּ

Turn around / repent!

וְהִשִּׁיבוּ מִכָּל־פְּשָׁעֵיכֶם

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

וְלֹא־יִהְיֶה לָכֶם לְמַכְשׁוֹל עוֹן:

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

Christians should remember that the ministry of Jesus began with a similar call to repentance.

See **Mark 1:14-15**,

14 Μετὰ δὲ τὸ παραδοθῆναι τὸν Ἰωάννην

But then after the John's being handed over,

ἦλθεν ὁ Ἰησοῦς εἰς τὴν Γαλιλαίαν

the Jesus came into the Galilee,

κηρύσσων τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τοῦ θεοῦ

preaching the good news of the God,

15 καὶ λέγων ὅτι πεπλήρωται ὁ καιρὸς

and say that the time had been fulfilled,

καὶ ἤγγικεν ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ·

and the kingdom of the God had drawn near:

μετανοεῖτε

Repent! / Turn Around!

(continued...)

וְלִמָּה תָמוּתוּ בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל:

And for what reason will you (plural) die, household of Israel?¹⁸⁰⁷

33:12¹⁸⁰⁸ וְאַתָּה בֶן-אָדָם אֵמַר אֶל-בְּנֵי-עַמּוּךָ

And you, Son of Adam / Humanity, say to your people's children,

צְדָקַת הַצְּדִיק

(The) righteousness of the righteous person

לֹא תִצְלֵנוּ בְּיוֹם פְּשָׁעוֹ

will not deliver him in a day of his transgression;¹⁸⁰⁹

¹⁸⁰⁶(...continued)

καὶ πιστεύετε ἐν τῷ εὐαγγελίῳ.

And believe in the good news!

What was the good news? It was that everyone in Galilee—regardless of race or nationality, regardless of religious condition—unclean or unwanted—could enter the Kingdom of God, simply by repenting and believing the good news. They didn't have to go to Jerusalem to the priests, and make animal sacrifices in the temple. All that was required was to turn their lives around, and believe in the good news that they were acceptable, that God loved them and forgave them. It is no wonder that the orthodox Jews wanted to get rid of Jesus, to put him to death!

¹⁸⁰⁷

Rabbi Fisch comments that death because of sin is not inevitable. “The Divine decree can be averted by repentance.” (P. 223)

¹⁸⁰⁸

Hilmer comments on **33:12-20** that this section “deals with the same subject as **18:21-29**—namely, that the individual, whether righteous or wicked, has a choice to live righteously each day.

Darr comments that “**Verse 12** sets out the principle by which Divine Justice operates: one's past does not determine one's present or future.” (P. 300)

¹⁸⁰⁹

Rabbi Fisch comments that “At first sight **verse 12** seems to assert that a man's past is not taken into account by God Who judges him by His moral state at a particular moment...

(continued...)

וְרִשְׁעַת הַרְשָׁעִים

and (the) wickedness of the wicked person

לֹא יִכְפֹּל בָּהּ

will not cause his stumbling by it,

בְּיוֹם שׁוּבוֹ מִרְשָׁעוֹ

in a day of his turning from his wickedness.¹⁸¹⁰

וְצַדִּיק לֹא יוּכַל לְחַיּוֹת בָּהּ

And a righteous person will not be able to live by it [his righteousness],

בְּיוֹם חַטָּאתוֹ:

in a day of his sinning!¹⁸¹¹

¹⁸⁰⁹(...continued)

“Davidson correctly interprets the passage as follows: ‘His (Ezekiel’s) purpose is to teach the general truth that the past of one’s life does not of necessity determine the future either in itself or in the judgment of [YHWH]. This, next to the assurance of [YHWH’s] gracious will regarding men (**verse 11**), was the truth most needed to comfort the people and awaken them out of the stupor which lay on them into a moral life and activity again.’ (P. 223)

Darr asks, “Are **verses 12-16** ‘good news’ to the exiles? One would think so. After all, they have already acknowledged their heavy burden of rebellions and sins (**verse 10**). Surely they would identify with, and seek to emulate, the repentant wicked who, by turning from their previous ways, are released from God’s death sentence. Yahweh is offering Ezekiel’s compatriots both a clean slate (past iniquities are promptly forgotten) and life! Yet they are insisting that ‘the way of the Lord is not just’... Perhaps they are angered by the notion that Yahweh forgets a lifetime of righteous deeds (a ‘treasury of merit’) at the moment when a righteous person commits iniquity. Is that Divine Justice? But the opposite is also true: Yahweh forgets a lifetime of rebellions and sins at the moment when a wicked person turns from evil and begins to do good. And that act testifies mightily to God’s mercy.” (P. 300)

1810

Rabbi Fisch comments “The penitent sinner will not suffer for his past wickedness.” (P. 223)

1811

(continued...)

33:13 בְּאִמְרֵי לְצַדִּיק׃ חַיָּה יְחִיָּה

When I say to the righteous, He shall surely live—

וְהוּא־בָטַח עַל־צְדָקָתוֹ וְעָשָׂה עוֹל

and he trusted in his righteousness, and did injustice,

כֹּל־[צְדָקָתוֹ] לֹא תִזְכְּרֶנָּה

all his righteousness¹⁸¹² will not be remembered,¹⁸¹³

וּבְעוֹלוֹ אֲשֶׁר־עָשָׂה

and in his injustice which he did,

בּוֹ יָמוּת׃

in / by it he will die!

33:14 וּבְאִמְרֵי לְרָשָׁע׃ מוֹת תָּמוּת

And when I say to the wicked person, You shall surely die!

וְשָׁב מִחַטָּאתוֹ

And he turns from his sin,

וְעָשָׂה מִשְׁפָּט וְצְדָקָה׃

and does justice and righteousness:¹⁸¹⁴

¹⁸¹¹(...continued)

The righteous person who sins will not “escape punishment for his sin by reason of his former righteousness.” (Rabbi Fisch, p. 224)

¹⁸¹²

The Masoretes offer two readings: first, the *kethibh*, “what is written,” צְדָקָתוֹ, “his righteousness”; and second, the *qere*, “to be read,” צְדָקָתָיו, “his righteous deeds.”

¹⁸¹³

Compare **Ezekiel 18:24**.

¹⁸¹⁴

(continued...)

33:15 חָבַל יָשִׁיב רְשָׁע׃

a wicked person shall return a pledge;

וְזָלָה יְשָׁלֵם׃

he shall restore anything stolen.¹⁸¹⁵

בְּחֻקֹּת הַחַיִּים הֵלֵךְ׃

By statutes of the life he walked¹⁸¹⁶

¹⁸¹⁴(...continued)

Compare **Ezekiel 18:27**.

¹⁸¹⁵

We think “returning a pledge” and “restoring anything stolen” are very similar—the pledge that he has taken from a poor person that he does not return immediately is in YHWH’s eyes the equivalent of stealing. Compare **Ezekiel 18:7**.

¹⁸¹⁶

Rabbi Fisch says this means “The laws of God in general which prolong life.” (P. 224)

Hilmer comments that “The purpose of [YHWH’s] law was to foster and protect life (compare **Ezekiel 20:13, 21**).” (P. 1273)

20:13, וַיִּמְרוּ-בֵּי בֵּית-יִשְׂרָאֵל בַּמִּדְבָּר׃

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

בְּחֻקֹּתַי לֹא-הֵלְכוּ׃

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-שַׁבְּתֹתַי חָלְלוּ מְאֹד׃

And My sabbaths they polluted / profaned exceedingly.

וְאָמַר לְשַׁפֵּךְ חֲמָתִי עֲלֵיהֶם׃

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

(continued...)

לְבַלְתִּי עֲשׂוֹת עוֹל

in order to not do injustice;

חַיּוֹ יִחִיָּה

he shall surely live;

¹⁸¹⁶(...continued)

בַּמִּדְבָּר לְכַלּוֹתָם:

in the desert / wilderness, to finish them off!

20:21, וַיִּמְרוּ-בֵי הַבָּנִים

And the children / sons rebelled against Me.

בְּחֻקוֹתַי לֹא-הָלְכוּ

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

וְאֶת-מִצְוֹתַי לֹא-שָׁמְרוּ

and My commandments they did not keep,

לְעֲשׂוֹת 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 חַמְתִּי עֲלֵיהֶם

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

לְכַלּוֹת אֶפְי בָּם בַּמִּדְבָּר:

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

The two passages are almost identical, as Ezekiel emphasizes the purpose of the Divine statutes—to give life, and to avoid YHWH's wrath and anger. YHWH's gift of life cannot be received by those who do not repent and obey Him! See the next footnote.

לֹא יָמוּת:

he shall not die!¹⁸¹⁷

1817

Rabbi Fisch states that this is “as was previously determined by Divine judgment.” (P. 224)

Hilmer comments that in the phrase “he shall surely live,” it becomes clear that [YHWH’s] purpose is to “foster and support life.” Any person who turns and does what YHWH commands “will surely live. The entire section is Ezekiel’s answer to the despairing question of **verse 10**.” (P. 1273)

But notice that Ezekiel does not know of, or command, a legalistic code of 613 commandments as the will of YHWH, which must be fulfilled to the letter in order to live. Rather, it is a much smaller list of commandments, such as are found in **chapter 22**, which we can summarize as follows:

No shedding of blood;
no idolatry;
no disrespect for parents;
no oppression of immigrants, orphans and widows;
no despite for set-apart things and sabbath days;
no slander;
no eating on the mountains;
no sexual wickedness;
no taking of bribes;
no taking of interest;
no oppression of neighbors;

no forgetting of YHWH;
no taking of treasure by prophets;
no violating of YHWH’s teaching by priests;
no smearing whitewash by prophets, or practicing divination;
no extortion and robbery;
no oppression of poor and extortion from immigrants.

You can easily see how such lists would grow, and eventuate in the 613 commandments of later Judaism, especially after the time of Ezra and the putting together of the **Five [Scrolls] of Moses**; and it is easy to understand how legalistic Judaism grew out of that. But for Ezekiel the priest, it was a much smaller, simpler matter. And we are reminded of how Jesus rejected the legalistic Judaism of his day, summing up the Divine commands in simple, easily remembered phrases, such as “Love God and love your neighbor,” or “Do to others as you would have them do to you.” Ezekiel was no legalist, nor was Jesus. And forgiveness was a simple matter for both Ezekiel and Jesus—it was simply a matter of repenting before YHWH, and trusting Him for the future. We think Jesus would agree with Ezekiel on each
(continued...)

33:16 כֹּל-חַטָּאתוֹ (חַטָּאתָיו) אֲשֶׁר חָטָא

All his sins¹⁸¹⁸ which he sinned

לֹא תִזְכָּרְנָה לּוֹ

will not be remembered to / against him;

מִשְׁפָּט וצְדָקָה עָשָׂה

justice and righteousness he did—¹⁸¹⁹

חַיּוֹ יִחְיֶה:

He shall surely live!

33:17 וְאָמְרוּ בְנֵי עַמֶּיךָ

And your people's children will say,

לֹא יִתְקַן דְרֶגְךָ אֲדֹנָי

(The) way of my Lord is not regulated (correctly)!¹⁸²⁰

וְהֵמָּה דְרֵבְכֶם לֹא יִתְקַן:

And they, their way is not regulated (correctly)!

¹⁸¹⁷(...continued)

of these commandments—as well as on his demand for repentance. What do you think?

¹⁸¹⁸

The Masoretes offer two readings: first, the *kethibh*, “what is written,” חַטָּאתוֹ; and second, the *qere*, “to be read,” חַטָּאתָיו—correcting a mistake in spelling / pointing in the original Hebrew text.

¹⁸¹⁹

For the primary importance of “justice and righteousness” see the following passages, which could be greatly expanded: **1 Kings 10:9; 2 Chronicles 9:8; Psalm 99:4; Isaiah 33:5; Jeremiah 9:24; 22:3, 15; 23:5; 33:15**. “Justice and righteousness” could well sum up the commandments listed above. Notice how “turning from righteousness is considered “doing injustice” in **verse 18**.

¹⁸²⁰

See **Ezekiel 18:25**. Reimer comments that “When people do wrong, they are quick to complain about God rather than admitting their own sin.” (P. 1552)

33:18¹⁸²¹ בְּשׁוֹב־צְדִיק מִצְדֻקָּתוֹ

When a righteous person turns from his righteousness,

וַעֲשֶׂה עוֹל וּמָת בָּהֶם:

and does injustice, and shall die by them;

33:19 וּבְשׁוֹב רָשָׁע מִרְשָׁעָתוֹ

and when a wicked person turns from his wickedness,

וַעֲשֶׂה מִשְׁפָּט וּצְדָקָה

and does justice and righteousness,

עֲלֵיהֶם הוּא יִחְיֶה:

because of them he shall live.

33:20 וְאַמְרָתֶם לֹא יִתְכַן דְרֶךְ אֲדֹנָי

And you (plural) will say, My Lord's way is not regulated (correctly)!¹⁸²²

1821

For **verses 18 and 19**, see **Ezekiel 18:26-27**.

1822

What do you think this criticism of YHWH's way means? We think the critics felt that deeds of righteousness ought to be added up, and weighed against deeds of wickedness. Then if the righteous deeds outweighed the wicked deeds, the person should be considered righteous, not wicked.

But YHWH, according to Ezekiel, did not judge righteousness and wickedness in this way. Instead, YHWH insisted on a living relationship with Himself, in which the person continually sought to practice righteousness, and rejected wickedness. Whenever that relationship was broken, and the individual did wickedness, he was considered "wicked" in YHWH's eyes, no matter how many righteous deeds he had done in the past. And if a wicked person saw the error of his way, and turned to YHWH in repentance, and practiced righteousness, he was considered "righteous", no matter how many wicked deeds he had done in the past.

What do you think? How do you think righteousness and wickedness ought to be considered, or evaluated? Do you agree with YHWH's critics, or with YHWH?

אִישׁ כְּדַרְכּוֹ אֲשֶׁפּוֹט אֶתְכֶם בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל:

I will judge you people, each one according to his ways,¹⁸²³ house of Israel!¹⁸²⁴

**Jerusalem's Fall Reported and Explained--
Which Becomes the Basis for a Radical Change in Ezekiel's Message
and in His Ability to Speak Freely to the People (33:21-33)¹⁸²⁵**

1823

Rabbi Fisch says the phrase “after his ways” means “after his ways in the present.” (P. 225)

1824

Darr reflects on **verses 10-20** that “Ezekiel has been obedient, not rebellious, in the performance of his task; and he remains so in the present passage. But now, he faces a community in despair so deep that it questions the very possibility of survival...Yahweh meets their grief with promises of a new beginning and abundant life. Their admission of rebellion and sin is itself a turning point, and God turns toward them with the good news that they need not perish for their capital offenses but can, instead, start afresh with no ‘criminal record’ hanging over their heads. Their prison of pain and hopelessness has an open exit through which they can walk. What convict would choose to remain behind bars? Yet they respond not with gratitude, but with protestation. ‘The way of the Lord is not just,’ they insist. What madness is this?...

“Ezekiel insists upon God’s right to judge persons by their behavior here and now, unfettered by the past...Like the prodigal son, the wicked of Ezekiel’s community are not literally dead. But they are as good as dead, because Yahweh has pronounced the death sentence against them. Like the forgiving father, however, God rejoices when the ‘come to themselves’ (see **Luke 15:17**) thanks to Ezekiel’s warning, turn away from their death dealing way, and choose the path of obedience and life.” (Pp. 301-302)

1825

Rabbi Fisch entitles **verses 21-29** “News of Jerusalem’s Fall Reaches Ezekiel: His Prophecy Concerning the Remnant in Judea.”

A man who had escaped from the destruction of Jerusalem arrived in Babylon where Ezekiel and the exiles were, on January 8, 585 B.C.E., with the sad news that Jerusalem had fallen--an event that had taken place over four months before, on August 14, 586 B.C.E. This alarming fact meant that Ezekiel's previous messages had now been vindicated, by having happened--the test of all true messages for YHWH! Now, the Divine forbidding of open speech by Ezekiel (compare **Ezekiel 3:26**) is lifted, and Ezekiel is told that he will no longer have to keep silent.

(continued...)

33:21 וַיְהִי בַשָּׁתִּי עֶשְׂרֵה שָׁנָה בְּעֶשְׂרֵי בַחֲמֹשָׁה לְחֹדֶשׁ לְגָלוּתֵנוּ

And it happened in (the) twelfth year, in the tenth (month) on the fifth (day) of the month
of our exile,¹⁸²⁶

¹⁸²⁵(...continued)

Ezekiel's first message sounds very much like his former messages--since it is a warning to those remaining in the Land of Israel that they too will be destroyed, even though they have escaped the destruction up until now (**verses 23-29**).

Verses 30-33 are spoken to Ezekiel personally. The people in exile were coming to listen to his messages, but they were seeking to gain personally from his messages--not wanting to really follow his teaching. He had become to them little more than an entertainer, a singer or player of instrumental music. Nonetheless, Ezekiel must not give up on his speaking --for even if the people refuse to take him seriously and obey his message, they will know that a true prophet for YHWH has been in their midst, as his message comes true! Excellent advice for those who seek to speak for YHWH and for Jesus today!

Reimer entitles **33:21-22** "The Fall of Jerusalem." He comments that "This brief notice has an importance out of proportion to its size. It provides the hinge on which the main structure of the [**Scroll**] turns. The readers, and Ezekiel, have had preparation for this precise moment: Ezekiel's muteness was first encountered in **3:22-27**, and a marker had been put down when the siege of Jerusalem began (**24:1-2, 25-27**)..."

"The date is now January 585 B.C.E., about five months after the fall of the city. The arrival of the fugitive confirms the word spoken at the beginning of the siege (**24:25-27**), affirms Ezekiel's prophetic ministry, and establishes the work of [YHWH] in bringing it about. It also gives weight to the words that follow." (P. 1553)

Hilmer comments that "'The city has fallen!' With this statement all of Ezekiel's previous prophecies were fulfilled and vindicated. He was then sent with a new mission: pastoral comfort." (P. 1273)

Matties notes that this is "the turning point in the [**Scroll**] of **Ezekiel**—January, 586 B.C.E., when a messenger announces the fall of Jerusalem, which had occurred in July, 587 B.C.E. The point is to emphasize the fulfillment of the announcement recorded in **24:27**. Although Ezekiel had spoken earlier, as directed by [YHWH], this new ability allows him to engage in conversation with the exiles about the shape of hope for the future. That hope could not be fully articulated as long as Jerusalem and the temple remained a false symbol of Divine Presence." (P. 1206)

1826

(continued...)

בָּא־אֵלַי הַפְּלִיט מִירוּשָׁלַם לֵאמֹר

the escapee from Jerusalem came to me, saying

הִכְתָּה הָעִיר:

The city was struck down!

33:22 וַיֵּרֶד־יְהוָה הַיָּמָּה אֵלַי בְּעָרֶב

And YHWH's Hand was upon me in the evening¹⁸²⁷

before the escapee's coming;

וַיִּפְתַּח אֶת־פִּי עַד־בּוֹא אֵלַי בַּבֶּקֶר

and He opened my mouth until coming to me in the morning;¹⁸²⁸

¹⁸²⁶(...continued)

Rabbi Fisch comments that “in the twelfth year of our captivity” means in “the captivity of Jehoiachin (**Ezekiel 1:2**) which began in 597 B.C.E. Apparently there was an interval of eighteen months before the news of the disaster reached Ezekiel in Babylon...

“Modern commentators consider this far too long and alter twelfth to ‘eleventh,’ which is the reading of some Hebrew manuscripts and ancient versions...

“Metsudath David offers an explanation which overcomes the difficulty without altering the Masoretic Text. The city fell in the fourth month of the eleventh year of Zedekiah (compare **Jeremiah 39:2**), i.e. Tammuz 586 B.C.E. But the Hebrew new year begins in Tishri, which is not the first but the seventh of the months. There is thus a dual system of reckoning: one which regards the year as a series of months beginning with Nisan in the spring, the other regarding the year as a period beginning in the autumn on the first day of the seventh month. Accordingly, the interval between the fourth month in the eleventh year (586) and the tenth month in the twelfth year (585) is only six months.” (P. 225)

¹⁸²⁷

See **Ezekiel 1:3**.

¹⁸²⁸

Rabbi Fisch notes that “Rashi explains the text as ‘before his coming,’ i.e. on the evening before the fugitive’s arrival Ezekiel was released from the bond of silence.” (P. 225)

וַיִּפְתַּח פִּי וְלֹא נִאֲלַמְתִּי עוֹד:

and he opened my mouth, and I was no longer silent.¹⁸²⁹

33:23¹⁸³⁰ וַיְהִי דְבַר־יְהוָה אֵלַי לֵאמֹר:

1829

Rabbi Fisch comments that “The silence imposed upon Ezekiel (compare **Ezekiel 3:26-27**) was removed by the arrival of the fugitive, as predicted in **24:26-27**. The corroboration of the prophet’s predictions established his authority as a messenger of [YHWH] among the exiles, and he was now given permission to ‘open his mouth’ in a new series of exhortations to prepare them for the coming restoration.” (P. 225)

Darr reflects that “Jerusalem’s destruction must have caused many Judeans to question both Yahweh’s power and the feasibility of Yahwistic religion. Why continue to worship a Deity Who, at the crucial hour, was either unwilling or unable to protect ‘His’ chosen people, the Davidic dynasty, the temple? From the perspective of Ezekiel’s preaching, however, Judah’s collapse vindicated God, Who had used Nebuchadnezzar’s army justly to punish the house of Israel for its long-lived history of sin. Moreover, the prophet was vindicated by the city’s demise. No longer could his community question his status as Yahweh’s authentic prophet, for his judgment oracles had been fulfilled; the eye-witness testimony of the survivor left no doubt about that...

“We should not doubt that Ezekiel himself experienced profound anguish when he heard the news. Judah was his homeland, Jerusalem his home town. So many of his people had perished.” (P. 304)

1830

Reimer entitles **33:23-33** “Culpability.” Although the movement toward restoration has begun, words from [YHWH] are castigating Judeans at home (**verses 23-29**) and abroad (**verses 30-33**) regarding ungodly living.” (P. 1553)

He entitles **33:23-29** “A Word for the Homelanders.” He comments that “Those left in Judah after its fall are addressed. The scenarios described (**verses 24-26**) overlap with those listed in **chapter 18**. The connection is appropriate. **Chapter 18** challenges the notion that ancestry ensures (or prohibits) blessing, and the claim confronted here, in part, is that ‘paternity’ implies possession. Rather, the desolation of the land (**33:27-29**) is directly linked to the people’s own abominations.” (P. 1553)

Matties comments that “This disputation concerning the inhabitants of Judah alludes to the promises to Israel’s ancestor Abraham (**verses 23-24**; see also **Genesis 17:1-7**; **Isaiah 51:2**). By utilizing typical accusations and punishments (see also **Ezekiel 18:1-20**; **22:1-16**), Ezekiel’s response leaves no room for hope even for the survivors (**verses 25-28**). No theological formula can avail against

(continued...)

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

33:24 בֶּן-אָדָם

Son of Adam / Humanity,

יְשֵׁבֵי הַחֲרָבוֹת הָאֵלֶּה עַל-אֲדֹמַת יִשְׂרָאֵל אֹמְרִים לֵאמֹר

those inhabiting these ruins upon Israel's land¹⁸³¹ are speaking, saying

אַחַד הָיָה אַבְרָהָם וַיִּירַשׁ אֶת-הָאָרֶץ

Abraham was one (person), and he inherited the land;¹⁸³²

¹⁸³⁰(...continued)

the purposes of God, nor has land been severed from the requirements of righteousness (**verse 26b**). The land is destined to become desolate before [YHWH] is fully acknowledged (**verse 29**).” (P. 1206)

1831

Rabbi Fisch explains that this is referring to the people “who were left in the ruined cities with Gedaliah as governor.” (Pp. 225-26) See **2 Kings 25:22**,

וְהָעָם הַנִּשְׁאָר בְּאֶרֶץ יְהוּדָה

And the people that was left remaining in (the) land of Judah,

אֲשֶׁר הִשְׁאִיר נְבוּכַדְנֶצַּר מֶלֶךְ בָּבֶל

whom Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon left remaining—

וַיִּפְקֹד עֲלֵיהֶם אֶת-גִּדְיָהוּ

and he appointed over them *gedhalyahu* / Gedalyahu,

בֶּן-אַחִיָּקָם בֶּן-שַׁפָּן:

son of Achiyqam, son of Shaphan.

1832

Reimer comments that “The patriarchs (Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob) are rarely mentioned by the prophets. For this invocation of Abraham, compare **Isaiah [29:22], 41:8; 51:2** [and **63:16, Jeremiah 33:26** which also mentions Isaac and Jacob. The name Jacob occurs some 62 times in **Isaiah, Jeremiah** and **Ezekiel**. We would say that this is far more mentions than ‘rarely’!]”

“The Judeans’ ‘logic’ of arguing from the ‘one’ to the ‘many’ here is deeply flawed. On possession of land at this time, see also **Jeremiah 39:10**,

10 וּמִן-הָעָם הַדְּלִיִּים

And from the people, the poor ones,

(continued...)

וְאַנְחָנוּ רַבִּים לָנוּ

and we, we have many (people);

נִתְּנָה הָאָרֶץ לְמוֹרְשָׁה:

the land was given for a possession!¹⁸³³

¹⁸³²(...continued)

אֲשֶׁר אֵין־לָהֶם מְאוּמָה

who had nothing,

הַשָּׂאִיר נְבוּזַרְאֲדָן רַב־טַבָּחִים בְּאֶרֶץ יְהוּדָה

Nebhuzaradhan, Captain of the guard left remaining in (the) land of Judah;

וַיִּתֵּן לָהֶם כְּרָמִים וַיִּגְבִּים

and he gave to them vineyards and fields

בְּיוֹם הַהוּא:

on that day.” (P. 1553)

1833

Rabbi Fisch comments that “The survivors in the land confidently hoped that they would stay there permanently and form the nucleus of the future Israel. Was not the land given to one individual, the patriarch Abraham? They were more than one and dwelt on its soil; so how much greater was their claim to the land as his heirs!” (P. 226)

Hilmer states that this is “a boast by the unrepentant, similar to that of **11:15**,

בְּן־אָדָם אַחִיךָ

Son of Adam / Humanity, your brothers,

אַחִיךָ אֲנָשֵׁי גְאֻלְתְּךָ

your brothers, men of your exile,

וְכָל־בַּיִת יִשְׂרָאֵל כָּלָה

and all Israel’s house, all of it--

אֲשֶׁר אָמְרוּ לָהֶם יוֹשְׁבֵי יְרוּשָׁלַם

to whom the inhabitants of Jerusalem said,

רַחֲקוּ מֵעַל יְהוָה

They are far distant / be far distant from YHWH!

לָנוּ הִיא נִתְּנָה

To us it (the land) was given,

(continued...)

33:25 לְכִן אֵמַר אֲלֵיהֶם

Therefore, say to them,¹⁸³⁴

כֹּה-אָמַר | אֲדַנִּי יְהוָה

In this was my Lord YHWH spoke:

עַל-הַדָּם | תֹּאכְלוּ

You people are eating upon the blood,¹⁸³⁵

וְעֵינֵיכֶם תִּשְׂאוּ | אֶל-גִּלּוּלֵיכֶם

and you are lifting your eyes to your idols,¹⁸³⁶

¹⁸³³(...continued)

הָאָרֶץ לְמוֹרָשָׁה:

the land for a possession!” (P. 1273)

¹⁸³⁴

Darr comments that “With the fall of Jerusalem—at least a five-month-old fact in Palestine, but fairly fresh news to the exiles of 597 B.C.E.—Ezekiel is commanded by Yahweh to ‘address’ those Judeans who have survived the Babylonian onslaught and remain in their homeland...Ezekiel’s *actual* audience remains his exilic community—not only the first deportees, but also those who have only recently arrived.” (P. 305)

¹⁸³⁵

Rabbi Fisch comments that “Kimchi and Metsudath David understand the phrase as a heathen practice of consuming the flesh of a sacrificial animal while the worshipers sat round its collected blood (compare **Leviticus 19:26**). Rashi interprets the language figuratively: you murder the rich and live on what you take from them. Another possible explanation is that they violated the law of **Leviticus 3:17, 17:10** by not removing the blood before the flesh is eaten.” (P. 226)

Hilmer notes that eating meat with the blood in it is “forbidden by [YHWH] in **Genesis 9:4; Leviticus 7:26-27; 17:10; Deuteronomy 12:16, 23.**” (P. 1273)

¹⁸³⁶

See **Ezekiel 18:6**.

וְדָם תִּשְׁפְּכוּ

and you are shedding blood,¹⁸³⁷

וְהָאָרֶץ תִּירָשׁוּ:

and shall you inherit the land?¹⁸³⁸

33:26 עִמְדַתְּם עַל-חַרְבְּכֶם

You (plural) stood / relied upon your sword,¹⁸³⁹

עָשִׂיתָ תוֹעֵבָה

you made an abomination;

וְאִישׁ אֶת-אִשְׁתּוֹ רָעָהוּ טְמֵאתָם

and each one of you people made your neighbor's wife unclean;

וְהָאָרֶץ תִּירָשׁוּ:

and shall you inherit the land?

33:27 כֹּה-תֹאמַר אֱלֹהִים

In this way you shall speak to them:

1837

See **Ezekiel 22:9**.

1838

Rabbi Fisch comments that “The holy land does not tolerate idolatry and bloodshed within its borders. It was because of such crimes that the original inhabitants, the Canaanites, were cast out (compare **Leviticus 18:24-27**).” (P. 226)

Reimer comments on **33:25-26**, “On this catalog of crimes, compare **18:5-18**. ‘You eat flesh with the blood’ is literally ‘you eat over the blood,’ an idiom used also in **Leviticus 19:26**. The reference is to illicit sacrifice. Ezekiel’s rhetorical questions (‘shall you then possess the land?’) imply the terms of the covenant that the homelander have seemingly forgotten.” (P. 1553)

1839

Rabbi Fisch comments that “The sense appears to be: you are constantly engaged in acts of violence.” (P. 226)

כֹּה־אָמַר אֲדַנִּי יְהוָה

In this way my Lord YHWH spoke:

חַי־אֲנִי אִם־לֹא אֲשֶׁר בְּחָרְבוֹת בְּחָרֵב יִפְּלוּ

As I live,¹⁸⁴⁰ surely those in the ruins shall fall by the sword;¹⁸⁴¹

וְאֲשֶׁר עַל־פְּנֵי הַשָּׂדֶה

and the ones upon the field's surface,

לְחַיָּה נִתְּתוּ לְאֲכָלוֹ

I will give to the wild animal(s) to eat him;¹⁸⁴²

וְאֲשֶׁר בְּמִצְדוֹת וּבְמַעְרוֹת

and those in the strongholds / masadas and in the caves,

בְּדַבַּר יָמוּתוּ:

by the pestilence will die!¹⁸⁴³

33:28 וְנִתְּתִי אֶת־הָאָרֶץ שְׂמָמָה וּמִשְׁמָה

And I will make the land a desolation and a waste;

1840

The phrase, “As surely as I live,” in the mouth of YHWH, is a Divine oath. See footnote 461.

1841

Rabbi Fisch comments that “The inhabitants of the towns devastated by the enemy will be included in the work of destruction.” (Pp. 226-27)

1842

Rabbi Fisch comments that “They who fled from the cities before the arrival of the troops will not escape, but be devoured by beasts of prey.” (P. 227)

1843

Rabbi Fisch notes that the pestilence “is the effect of overcrowding and under-feeding.” (P. 227)

Hilmer states that the threefold sword and wild animals and plague should be compared to “the threefold threat in **Ezekiel 14:12-21.**” (P. 1273) See footnote 423.

וְנִשְׁבַּת גְּאוֹן עֹזָהּ

and its pride of strength will cease.

וְשָׂמְמוּ הַרֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל

And Israel's mountains will be devastated

מֵאֵין עוֹבֵר:

without anyone crossing over (them).

33:29 וַיֵּדְעוּ כִּי־אֲנִי יְהוָה

And they will know that I (am) YHWH,

בְּתַתִּי אֶת־הָאָרֶץ שְׂמָמָה וּמִשְׁפּוּהָ

when I make the land a desolation and a waste,

עַל כָּל־תּוֹעֵבֹתָם אֲשֶׁר עָשׂוּ:

because of all their abominations which they made.¹⁸⁴⁴

33:30¹⁸⁴⁵

1844

No, Ezekiel's message has not changed that much—there is still in it his condemnation of those who have not repented. His words of comfort and hope do not negate his demand for repentance!

1845

Rabbi Fisch entitles **verses 30-33** “The Exiles’ Attitude to Ezekiel.” He comments on **verse 30** that “The Jewish commentators understand this to mean that the Judean exiles spoke about Ezekiel in hostile and malicious tones. It is more probable that by the event, he became the topic of conversation among them and they discussed his sayings...*by the walls*—where shade was to be found from the sun’s heat; *in the doors of the houses*—a natural place for small groups to gather and converse.” (P. 227)

Reimer entitles **33:30-33** “A Word for the Exiles.” He comments that “If the ‘implied’ audience for **verses 23-29** was the homelander, the ‘real’ audience listening in was Ezekiel’s fellow exiles. Their enjoyment of the rebuke aimed at their land-hungry compatriots is cut short as Ezekiel turns to accuse them of also being marked by greed (**verse 31**)...

“Compounding this, they treat prophetic words as mere entertainment (**verse 32**). No judgment is pronounced, but it is ominously implied (**verse 33**).” (P. 1554)

(continued...)

וְאַתָּה בֶן-אָדָם

And you, Son of Adam / Humanity,

בְּנֵי עַמֶּךָ הַנִּדְבָרִים בְּךָ

your people's children, the ones speaking to one another about you--

אֶצֶל הַקִּירוֹת וּבַפְתָּחֵי הַבָּתִּים

near the walls and in the doors of the houses--

וְדַבֵּר-תָּדַר אֶת-אֶחָד אִישׁ אֶת-אָחִיו לֵאמֹר

and he will speak, one to one, a man to his brother, saying,

בָּאוּ-נָא וְשִׁמְעוּ מִהַ הַדְּבָר

Come, now; and hear what the Word (is),

הַיּוֹצֵא מֵאֵת יְהוָה:

the one coming forth from YHWH!¹⁸⁴⁶

33:31 וַיָּבֹאוּ אֵלַיךָ כְּמָבֹאוֹ-עָם

And they came to you, like a coming of a people,

¹⁸⁴⁵(...continued)

Hilmer notes that **verses 30-33** are “words of assurance meant for Ezekiel alone.” (P. 1273)

Matties comments that “By reflecting on Ezekiel’s audience in exile [YHWH] describes them as people who want only to be entertained (see also **8:1; 14:1; 20:1**). They hear, but do not act. Their mouths crave more sensual talk and their heart is committed to indiscriminately acquired gain (**verse 31**). Echoing themes of listening and not listening from **2:1-3:15**, the text characterizes the (recalcitrant [having an obstinately uncooperative attitude toward authority or discipline] exiles (see also **3:11**) as the primary audience for the entire [Scroll]. The chapter asserts that, until they truly hear by identifying with Ezekiel’s words of judgment and begin the process of turning around (**33:1-20; 18:30-32**), they cannot participate in the new work of [YHWH].” (P. 1206)

¹⁸⁴⁶

Rabbi Fisch comments that “They displayed curiosity to know what his message was, but not a desire to act upon it.” (P. 227)

וַיֵּשְׁבוּ עַמִּי לְפָנַי

and My people sit in front of you;¹⁸⁴⁷

וְשָׁמְעוּ אֶת־דְּבָרַי

and they will hear your words,¹⁸⁴⁸

וְאוֹתָם לֹא יַעֲשׂוּ

but they will not do them,

כִּי־עֲנָבִים בְּפִיהֶם הִמָּה עֲשִׂים

because they are making lustful songs in their mouth(s);

אַחֲרֵי בִצְעָם לִבָּם הֵלֵךְ:

after their gain their heart / mind is walking / going.¹⁸⁴⁹

1847

Hilmer comments that “The people were waiting for Ezekiel to tell them how they could personally profit from the situation rather than what [YHWH’s] larger designs were for them (compare **Matt-hew 20:20-28** [where Jesus is depicted as rebuking the mother of his two disciples for her request to put her sons in a high position among his disciples—and Jesus used her request as an occasion for teaching concerning the necessity for all his disciples to become the servants of others, rather than seeking high positions].” (P. 1273)

1848

Rabbi Fisch comments that the people “come to the prophet to hear his words, ostensibly to receive instruction in the will of [YHWH]...as though they were in fact [YHWH’s] people eager to learn and obey His laws...They speak with admiration of the prophet’s discourse, but in their hearts are thoughts of self-interest which conflict with the principles he expressed.” (Pp. 227-28)

1849

Translations vary for the last part of **verse 31**:

King James, “for with their mouth they shew much love, *but* their heart goeth after their covetousness.”

Tanakh, “For they produce nothing but lust with their mouths; and their hearts pursue nothing but gain.”

New Revised Standard, “For flattery is on their lips, but their heart is set on their gain.”

New International, “With their mouths they express devotion, but their hearts are greedy for unjust gain.”

New Jerusalem, “What they act on is the lie in their mouths, and their hearts are set on dishonest gain.”

(continued...)

33:32 וְהִנֵּךְ לָהֶם

And look at you—to them,

כְּשִׁיר עֲגָבִים יִפָּה קוֹל

(you are) like a song of lustfulness, a beautiful voice,¹⁸⁵⁰

וּמְטֵב נְגִן

and playing an instrument well;

וְשָׁמְעוּ אֶת־דְּבָרֶיךָ

and they hear your words—

וְעֹשִׂים אֵינָם אוֹתָם:

but / and doing them, they are not!¹⁸⁵¹

¹⁸⁴⁹(...continued)

Greek, ὅτι ψεῦδος ἐν τῷ στόματι αὐτῶν καὶ ὀπίσω τῶν μισαμάτων ἡ καρδία αὐτῶν,
“Because a lie (is) in the mouth of theirs, and after the shameful deeds, their heart / mind.”

¹⁸⁵⁰

Hilmer notes that the people were thinking of Ezekiel as “one who sings,” and this may “indicate that Ezekiel chanted his oracles (see **2 Kings 3:15** [where Elisha will not prophesy until a musician is brought, and Elisha prophesies as the musician plays] and **Isaiah 5:1** [where Isaiah sings a love song for his beloved vineyard]), but more likely the prophet was using a metaphor.” (P. 1273)

¹⁸⁵¹

Rabbi Fisch comments that “The hearers were attracted by the beauty of his language, and listened to him only as one does to an entertainer. His exhortation made no impression upon them.” (P. 228)
See: **Isaiah 29:13**,

וַיֹּאמֶר אֲדֹנָי

And my Lord said,

יֵעַן כִּי נִגַּשׁ הָעָם הַזֶּה בִּפְּוִי

Because this people drew near with its mouth,

וּבִשְׂפָתָיו כִּבְדוּנִי

and with its lips honored Me,

(continued...)

¹⁸⁵¹(...continued)

וּלְבוֹ רָחֵק מִמֶּנִּי

and its heart was far from Me;

וַתִּהְיֶינָה יִרְאַתָּם אֵתִי

and their fear / reverence of Me

מִצְוַת אֲנָשִׁים מִלְמַדָּה:

(was) a commandment learned from men / people.

Matthew 21:28-32,

28 Τί δὲ ὑμῖν δοκεῖ;

What do you think?

ἄνθρωπος εἶχεν τέκνα δύο.

A man had two sons.

καὶ προσελθὼν τῷ πρώτῳ εἶπεν·

And having come to the first, he said,

τέκνον, ὕπαγε σήμερον ἐργάζου ἐν τῷ ἀμπελῶνι.

Son, go and work in the vineyard today.

29 ὁ δὲ ἀποκριθεὶς εἶπεν· οὐ θέλω,

And he answered, I do not wish to,

ὑστερον δὲ μεταμεληθεὶς ἀπήλθεν.

but afterward he changed his mind and went.

30 προσελθὼν δὲ τῷ ἑτέρῳ

And then having come to the other son

εἶπεν ὡσαύτως.

he spoke in the same way.

ὁ δὲ ἀποκριθεὶς εἶπεν·

And then answering he said,

ἐγώ, κύριε, καὶ οὐκ ἀπήλθεν.

I (go,) sir! and he did not go.

31 τίς ἐκ τῶν δύο ἐποίησεν τὸ θέλημα τοῦ πατρός;

Which of the two did the will of his father?

λέγουσιν· ὁ πρῶτος.

They say, The first.

λέγει αὐτοῖς ὁ Ἰησοῦς·

the Jesus says to them,

ἀμὴν λέγω ὑμῖν ὅτι οἱ τελῶναι καὶ αἱ πόρναι

Truly, I say to you, that the tax collectors and the prostitutes

προάγουσιν ὑμᾶς εἰς τὴν βασιλείαν τοῦ θεοῦ.

go before you into the Kingdom of the God.

(continued...)

¹⁸⁵¹(...continued)

- 32 ἦλθεν γὰρ Ἰωάννης πρὸς ὑμᾶς ἐν ὁδῷ δικαιοσύνης,
For John came to you in a way of righteousness,
καὶ οὐκ ἐπιστεύσατε αὐτῷ,
and you did not believe him,
οἱ δὲ τελῶναι καὶ αἱ πόρναι ἐπίστευσαν αὐτῷ·
but then the tax collectors and the prostitutes believed in him.
ὕμεις δὲ ἰδόντες οὐδὲ μετεμελήθητε ὕστερον τοῦ πιστεῦσαι αὐτῷ.
But then having seen it, you did not afterward change your minds and believe in him.

James / Jacob 1:22-25,

- 22 Γίνεσθε δὲ ποιηταὶ λόγου
But then be doers of a Word,
καὶ μὴ μόνον ἀκροαταὶ παραλογιζόμενοι ἑαυτούς.
and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.
- 23 ὅτι εἴ τις ἀκροατῆς λόγου ἐστίν
For if anyone is a hearer of a Word
καὶ οὐ ποιητής,
and not a doer,
οὗτος ἕοικεν ἀνδρὶ κατανοοῦντι
this one is likened to a man who looks intently
τὸ πρόσωπον τῆς γενέσεως αὐτοῦ ἐν ἐσόπτρῳ·
at his natural face in a mirror.
- 24 κατενόησεν γὰρ ἑαυτὸν
For he looked intently at himself,
καὶ ἀπελήλυθεν καὶ εὐθέως ἐπελάθετο ὅποιος ἦν.
and went away and at once forgot what he was like.
- 25 ὁ δὲ παρακύψας εἰς νόμον τέλειον
But then the one who looks into the perfect law,
τὸν τῆς ἐλευθερίας
the (law) of liberty,
καὶ παραμείνας
and perseveres,
οὐκ ἀκροατῆς ἐπιλησμονῆς γενόμενος
being no hearer who forgets
ἀλλὰ ποιητῆς ἔργου,
but rather a doer of work,
οὗτος μακάριος ἐν τῇ ποιήσει αὐτοῦ ἔσται.
this one will be blessed in his doing!

33:32 וּבִבְאֵהָ הִנֵּה בָאָהּ

And when it comes—look it is coming!

וַיֵּדְעוּ כִּי נְבִיא הָיָה בְּתוֹכְכֶם:

And they will know that a prophet / prophet was in their midst!¹⁸⁵²

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Rabbi Fisch comments that “When all the predictions have been fulfilled, they will realize that his words were not just fine oratory, but true prophecy.” (P. 228)