

## Chapter 5

### **Date:**

Between  
**July 31<sup>st</sup>, 593 BC and September 17<sup>th</sup>, 592 BC**  
(probably closer to 593 BC)

Ezekiel's first vision is recorded in chapter one. It is estimated to have occurred on July 31<sup>st</sup>, 593 BC. The next dated vision given to Ezekiel occurred in chapter eight. It is estimated that the revelation that is recorded in this chapter occurred between the chapter one and chapter eight. Chapter eight is estimated to have occurred on September 17<sup>th</sup>, 592 BC.

### **Historical Setting:**

The prophet Ezekiel is living among his fellow Jewish captives in the exile community of Tel-abib just outside the capital city of Babylonia, Babylon. King Nebuchadnezzar reigns during the entire time period during this chapter. King Zedekiah rules Jerusalem as a “Puppet” King under King Nebuchadnezzar’s control. Jerusalem is forced to pay tribute to the Babylonians, which by 588 BC, Zedekiah stopped paying. The events of this chapter occur just prior to or during the time period in which Zedekiah made this bold decision. This caused great anger on the part of the Babylonians, most especially King Nebuchadnezzar. King Zedekiah and most of the inhabitants of Jerusalem were stiff-necked, prideful, and outright wicked. During this time period, Nebuchadnezzar was involved in the expansion and beautification of Babylonia.

### **Preview:**

This chapter is a continuation of the instruction that Ezekiel was receiving from the Lord in chapter four. The Lord instructs Ezekiel to carry out a symbolic skit before the exiles in Babylon. The play that the Lord commanded Ezekiel to carry out relates the siege that would occur against Jerusalem. The Lord conveys the conditions that will exist in Jerusalem during the siege. The skit serves as prophetic warning from the Lord to His children.



**Verse 1:** “And thou, son of man, take thee a sharp knife, take thee a barber’s razor, and cause it to pass upon thine head and upon thy beard: then take thee balances to weigh, and divide the hair.”

The Lord, continuing to address and instruct the prophet Ezekiel from chapter four, calls the prophet by the title He consistently refers to Ezekiel as, "*son of man*". The title refers to Ezekiel's mortality as it references the fact that he is the son of a mortal man.

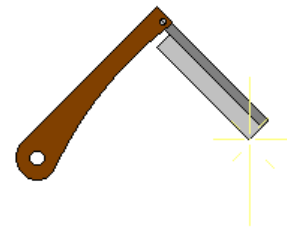
The Lord continues to outline a skit that Ezekiel would perform before the exiles in Babylonia. In this verse, the Lord instructs Ezekiel to take a sharp knife and a razor to the hair of his head. Ezekiel was to shave his head and beard bald. He was to retain the hair, weigh it, and divide it into groups.

This verse is full of symbolic overtures. The knife typically symbolizes sacrifice, vengeance, and death. Cutting with a knife signifies severance, division, and freeing. The Barber's razor carries similar symbolic meaning to the knife, with an additional association to the symbolism of the hair. The hair symbolizes one's life force, strength, energy, and the power of thought. Cutting or shaving one's hair denotes dedicating one's self or denouncing the physical.

In verse five of this chapter, the Lord specifically defines the symbolism behind the hair and says that it represents the children of Israel or more precisely, Jerusalem. The Lord specifically describes the knife that Ezekiel was to take as sharp. The razor by definition carries the idea of sharpness. The adjective "*sharp*" carries the idea of precision, exactness, quickness, and perfection.

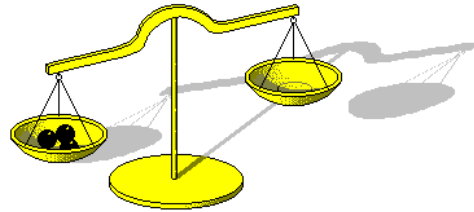
The Lord makes mention that the hair be removed from the head. The head symbolizes the chief member of the body, the seat of the life force, the soul, and the power of the soul. The head denotes wisdom, the mind, control, rule, and finally leadership. The hair of the head also included Ezekiel's beard. The beard symbolizes strength, virility, and sovereignty. The beards of ancient Mesopotamian gods, such as Marduk and Shamash have been interpreted as rays of the sun descending on earth. Among many societies, the beard symbolizes power and authority.

In brief summary, the act of Ezekiel shaving the hair from his head and beard represented the removal of the inhabitants of Jerusalem from their capital, Jerusalem. They viewed Jerusalem as the center of the world. It truly was the head of state. The Lord would issue this act



of death and severance with quickness and precision. None were to escape. Even the leaders and men of influence would feel the wrath of the Lord.

After the Lord instructs Ezekiel to shave his head, He instructs him to collect the hair and divide it. He was to do this by weighing the hair out on a set of



balances. The balance is usually used in symbolism to carry the idea of justice, impartiality, and judgement. The symbol of the balance carries the idea that man's merits and demerits will be weighed. Its use in Ezekiel's skit carries the idea that the Lord was going to issue justice against the Israelites for their iniquity.

**Verse 2:**

**“Thou shalt burn with fire a third part in the midst of the city, when the days of the siege are fulfilled: and thou shalt take a third part, and smite about it with a knife: and a third part thou shalt scatter in the wind; and I will draw out a sword after them.”**

From this verse, it is evident that Ezekiel divided his shaven hair from verse one into three groups. Ezekiel is instructed to take the first group of hair and burn it with fire. Fire and burning carry the symbolic meanings of transformation, purification, renewal of life, divine power, and the voice of the Lord. The term “fire” has obvious symbolic usage, but the act was also quite literal. In fulfillment of this act, the Apocrypha records, *“In the fifth year, and in the seventh day of the month,*



*what time as the Chaldeans took Jerusalem, and burned it with fire”* (Baruch 1:2). The city of Jerusalem was obviously burned at its capture by the Babylonians or Chaldeans. This fits with the Lord's instruction that the hair would be burned in the midst of the city, when the days of the siege were fulfilled. Apparently one-third of the inhabitants of Jerusalem would die in the fire.

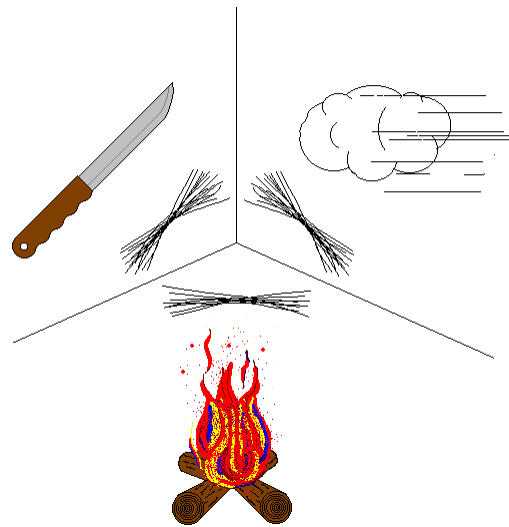
The fire could also represent the great famine, or lack for food and water that plagued Jerusalem during the siege. This famine truly consumed many of the lives of the inhabitants of Jerusalem like fire consumes a forest.

Before going further, it is appropriate that the term one-third be discussed. One-third is the reciprocal of the number three, and carries similar symbolic meaning. The number three usually symbolizes the

godhead, and consequently symbolized perfection. The number three and its relationship to the term perfection is further emphasized with other relationships that have to do with the number three. For example, heaven-earth-water, body-soul-spirit, birth-life-death, beginning-middle-end, and past-present-future. The number three is also the base number for three other numbers that have similar symbolic meanings,  $3 \times 4 = 12$  and  $3 + 4 = 7$ . We should keep in mind that the one-thirds spoken of in this verse might not be a literal one-third but rather a portion of a complete unit. It might also imply the all-encompassing nature of the Lord's commands and judgements.

After burning one-third of his cut hair with fire, Ezekiel is commanded to take another third and smite it with a knife. The commentary on verse one discussed the symbolism associated with the knife. It has to do with death and severance. The fact that the inhabitants of Jerusalem would be smitten with a knife could represent their eventual death or their severance from Jerusalem. This does not mean that one-third might escape the Lord's wrath, but rather it might be a symbolic representation for the many Israelites that were taken exile into Babylon after Jerusalem's takeover. Quite often symbols carry dual meanings. If this were the case, both messages could be true. The Apocrypha helps us understand the death that occurred in Jerusalem at the hands of the Babylonians. It is recorded, *"So far forth, that he,"* God, *"being wroth with his people for their great ungodliness, commanded the kings of the Chaldees to come up against them; Who slew their young men with the sword, yea, even within the compass of their holy temple, and spared neither young man or maid, old man or child, among them; for he delivered all into their hands"* (1<sup>st</sup> Esdras 1:52-53).

The final third of Jerusalem's inhabitants, symbolized by the hair of Ezekiel's head, were to be scattered by the wind. The wind is typically used as a representation for the spirit, the breath of life, and the power of God. It is also used to symbolize the intangible, transient, insubstantial, and elusive. The siege by Babylonia was the beginning of centuries of scattering for the House of Israel. By the will and power of God, the Jews were driven from nation to nation, land to land, and among every walk of life. They were truly driven like a leaf in the wind, not knowing where they would land or





what their fate would hold. They would spend many, many years under extreme persecution. This is symbolized by the Lord's statement that he would draw out a sword after them. The sword is a symbol of death, war, persecution, and vengeance.

In verse twelve of this chapter, the Lord gives somewhat of an explanation for the contents of this verse. He states, "*A third part of thee shall die with the pestilence, and with famine shall they be consumed in the midst of thee; and a third part shall fall by the sword round about thee; and I will scatter a third part into all the winds, and I will draw out a sword after them*".

**Verse 3-4:** **"Thou shalt also take thereof a few in number, and bind them in thy skirts. Then take of them again, and cast them into the midst of the fire, and burn them in the fire; for thereof shall a fire come forth into all the house of Israel."**

In the Hebrew culture, the skirt symbolized the authority and power of the wearer. It is also associated with the garment given to Adam to cover his nakedness after partaking of the forbidden fruit in the Garden of Eden (see Ezekiel 16:8). The skirt thus carries the symbolism of forgiveness, atonement and the covering of the sins of man. In addition, it also carries the idea of leadership.

As David battled King Saul for the right to the throne of Israel, the Lord delivered Saul into David's hands. The Old Testament records, "*And the men of David said unto him, Behold the day of which the Lord said unto thee, Behold, I will deliver thine enemy into thine hand, that thou mayest do to him as it shall seem good unto thee. Then David arose, and cut off the skirt of Saul's robe privily. And it came to pass afterward, that David's heart smote him, because he had cut off Saul's skirt*" (1<sup>st</sup> Samuel 24:4-5). The skirt was a significant symbol of royalty in this story. The Israelites understood the significance of this symbol and David was proclaimed King of Israel.

In the Book of Jeremiah, we read of a rather odd passage that states, "*Also in thy skirts is found the blood of the souls of the poor innocents: I have not found it by secret search, but upon all these*" (Jeremiah 2:34). Understanding that the skirt represents the leadership of a society or group makes this passage much more understandable. This group of leaders represented by the skirt, is the same group that existed in Ezekiel's time. They were wicked and evil. They were responsible for many deaths, even child sacrifices to pagan gods.

In the conclusion of this verse, a few of Ezekiel's shaven hairs were to be bound in his skirt. Since Ezekiel has previously served as a symbol for Babylon in his heavenly directed skirt, it might be assumed that the skirt referred to the Babylonian leadership. The hairs refer to the inhabitants of Israel. We know that many were taken in bondage to Babylon. Furthermore, we know that most of the captives lived lives of hard labor and poverty. Though there were some, like Daniel, that managed to obtain reasonably good lives in Babylon, most experienced hardships, death, and famine. This is also true of the skirts of Jerusalem. King Zedekiah and his court managed to escape from Jerusalem as it fell. Rumor says that they escaped through an underground canal that surfaced in the King's gardens outside of the city walls. From there they fled for their lives. As was expected, no one can escape the Lord's judgement. The Babylonians caught Zedekiah and his court. Zedekiah's eyes were removed, and his court spent the rest of their days in a Babylonian prison. This is the message that the Lord is conveying by saying that those bound in the skirt would also be burned with fire. Being burned with fire carries the same symbolic meaning used in verse two in association with Ezekiel burning his hair.

**Verse 5:** **“Thus saith the Lord GOD; This is Jerusalem: I have set it in the midst of the nations and countries that are round about her.”**

This verse is the Lord's explanation for the symbol of Ezekiel's shaven hair spoken of in verses one through four. He frankly states, *"This is Jerusalem"*.

The Lord adds that He had set Jerusalem in the midst of Nations. In other words, among all the great empires, Egypt, Persia, Assyria, Babylonia, Greece, etc., the Lord provided the Israelites with the Promised Land. In what appears to be almost an impossible feat, the Israelites had remained a strength among world giants.

**Verse 6:** **“And she hath changed my judgments into wickedness more than the nations, and my statutes more than the countries that are round about her: for they have refused my judgments and my statutes, they have not walked in them.”**

Despite the great blessings of the Lord, she (Jerusalem) was more wicked than the heathen nations that surrounded her. Jerusalem had broken the Lord's statutes. The American Heritage Dictionary defines *"statutes"* as follows.

**Statute** n. **1.** A law enacted by legislature **2.** A decree or an edict, as of a ruler **3.** An established law or rule, as of a corporation.

The Lord had established specific rules and laws for the Israelites to live by. They had not only failed to live them; they refused to live them. They had openly rebelled against God. Knowing the sins of Babylon, it could probably be said that no sins were known in Israel that were not known in Babylon. The difference between the two countries is the fact that Israel knew the law, while Babylon lived without the same light and knowledge. *"Where much is given, much is required"* (Doctrine and Covenants 82:3). It is for this reason that Israel was considered more wicked than the nations that surrounded them. We might ask ourselves this question. *"Do we live according to the lifestyles of the world around us?"* If so, then we too might be classified with Jerusalem: knowing the law, but following the world.

**Verse 7-8:** **"Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD; Because ye multiplied more than the nations that are round about you, and have not walked in my statutes, neither have kept my judgments, neither have done according to the judgments of the nations that are round about you; Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I, even I, am against thee, and will execute judgments in the midst of thee in the sight of the nations."**

The Lord has left very little to the imagination in this verse. Basically, the Lord states that He has greatly blessed Israel, more so than all the other nations about her, and yet the Israelites have responded with rebelliousness. Because of their rebelliousness, the Lord will send forth His wrath for all nations to see.

There is an interesting principle touched on in this verse. That is, if a man rebel openly for all to see, he will be dealt with openly. Modern day revelation says, *"And if any one offend openly, he or she shall be rebuked openly, that he or she may be ashamed. And if he or she confess not, he or she shall be delivered up unto the law of God"* (Doctrine and Covenants 42:91).

**Verse 9:** **"And I will do in thee that which I have not done, and whereunto I will not do any more the like, because of all thine abominations."**

How seriously devastating was the siege on Jerusalem going to be? How great was the Lord's fury? Well, so great was the destruction that the Lord was about to bring upon His children that it was not

comparable to any thing He had ever brought upon them at any other time or during any point in the future. Speaking for the Lord, Jeremiah said, *"I will make this city desolate, and an hissing; every one that passeth thereby shall be astonished and hiss because of all the plagues thereof (Jeremiah 19:8)."* Daniel prophesied likewise and said, *"...for under the whole heaven hath not been done as hath been done upon Jerusalem" (Daniel 9:12).*

This great catastrophe was brought about because of the abominations of the Israelites. The American Heritage Dictionary defines "abominations" as follows.

**Abomination** n. 1. Abhorrence; disgust 2. A cause of abhorrence or disgust.

What caused the Lord to be so disgusted? The sins His children committed. They had openly and willfully gone against everything He had taught and commanded them. They were wretched, evil, wicked, and spiritually dead.

**Verse 10:** **"Therefore the fathers shall eat the sons in the midst of thee, and the sons shall eat their fathers; and I will execute judgments in thee, and the whole remnant of thee will I scatter into all the winds."**

This verse indicates that the desperate situation (the siege by Babylonia) that was to develop in Jerusalem would result in cannibalism on the part of the Israelites. The famine and pestilence would lead fathers to eat their children and children to eat their fathers. Though the verse specifically mentions fathers, the acts of cannibalism also included mothers. Such acts of horror were not even done under the cover of shame, but rather in the midst of the other inhabitants of Jerusalem. Their desperation for food led them to commit such acts publicly.

The conditions that resulted in cannibalism in Jerusalem were also foreseen by Ezekiel's contemporary in Jerusalem, the prophet Jeremiah. Speaking for the Lord, Jeremiah prophesied, *"And I will cause them to eat the flesh of their sons and the flesh of their daughters, and they shall eat every one the flesh of his friend in the siege and straitness, wherewith their enemies, and they that seek their lives, shall straiten them" (Jeremiah 19:9).*

The Book of Lamentations is said to have been written, for the most part, during and shortly after the gruesome siege of Jerusalem. Of the conditions of this siege the book records, *"Behold, O Lord, and consider to whom thou hast done this. Shall the women eat their fruit,*



*and children of a span long? Shall the priest and the prophet be slain in the sanctuary of the Lord? The young and the old lie on the ground in the streets: my virgins and my young men are fallen by the sword; thou hast slain them in the day of thine anger; thou hast killed and not pitied. Thou hast called as in a solemn day my terrors round about, so that in the day of the Lord's anger none escaped nor remained: those that I have swaddled and brought up hath mine enemy consumed" (Lamentations 2:20-22). It goes on to record, "The hands of the pitiful women have sodden their own children: they were their meat in the destruction of the daughter of my people" (Lamentations 4:10). The conditions that existed in Jerusalem during this time period could definitely compete with just about any other time period in Jewish history for severity.*

Probably the most amazing fact associated with this verse of scripture is the fact that the Israelites were not only warned of the poor conditions that would follow their disobedience, by prophets of their own era, but they were warned of this event hundreds of years prior, by the prophet Moses. Moses told the children of Israel that if they remained righteous, many blessing would be pronounced upon them. On the other hand, disobedience to the Lord's commandments would bring upon them the wrath of God. Moses foresaw the invasion of the Babylonians into Jerusalem, and all of the events associated with it. Moses then left a verbal and written record of this knowledge to warn the children of Israel against transgressing the Lord's commandments. The Book of Deuteronomy records,

*"And it shall come to pass, if thou shalt hearken diligently unto the voice of the LORD thy God, to observe and to do all his commandments which I command thee this day, that the LORD thy God will set thee on high above all nations of the earth: And all these blessings shall come on thee, and overtake thee, if thou shalt hearken unto the voice of the LORD thy God. Blessed shalt thou be in the city, and blessed shalt thou be in the field. Blessed shall be the fruit of thy body, and the fruit of thy ground, and the fruit of thy cattle, the increase of thy kine, and the flocks of thy sheep. Blessed shall be thy basket and thy store (Deuteronomy 28:1-14)...But it shall come to pass, if thou wilt not hearken unto the voice of the LORD thy God, to observe to do all his commandments and his statutes which I command thee this day; that all these curses shall come upon thee, and overtake thee: Cursed shalt thou be in the city, and cursed shalt thou be in the field. Cursed shall be thy basket and thy store. Cursed shall be the fruit of thy*

*body, and the fruit of thy land, the increase of thy kine, and the flocks of thy sheep. Cursed shalt thou be when thou comest in, and cursed shalt thou be when thou goest out... Therefore shalt thou serve thine enemies which the LORD shall send against thee, in hunger, and in thirst, and in nakedness, and in want of all things: and he shall put a yoke of iron upon thy neck, until he have destroyed thee. The LORD shall bring a nation against thee from far, from the end of the earth, as swift as the eagle flieth; a nation whose tongue thou shalt not understand; A nation of fierce countenance, which shall not regard the person of the old, nor show favour to the young: And he shall eat the fruit of thy cattle, and the fruit of thy land, until thou be destroyed: which also shall not leave thee either corn, wine, or oil, or the increase of thy kine, or flocks of thy sheep, until he have destroyed thee. And he shall besiege thee in all thy gates, until thy high and fenced walls come down, wherein thou trustedst, throughout all thy land: and he shall besiege thee in all thy gates throughout all thy land, which the LORD thy God hath given thee. **And thou shalt eat the fruit of thine own body, the flesh of thy sons and of thy daughters, which the LORD thy God hath given thee, in the siege, and in the straitness, wherewith thine enemies shall distress thee...(Deuteronomy 28:15-53).**"*

Notice that Moses was very specific about the outcome of the Israelites disobedience. Not only does he reference the siege of Jerusalem, but he makes specific mention of cannibalism. Deuteronomy is not the only recorded place that the Lord's anointed make mention of the events that would follow a rebellious Israelite nation. In the Book of Leviticus, Moses again prophesied of a wicked Israelite nation. It records, "*And ye shall eat the flesh of your sons, and the flesh of your daughters shall ye eat*" (Leviticus 26:29).

Cannibalism is a horrifying act. It is the act of a spiritually fallen people. The results of physical and temporal deprivation to the point that all spiritual direction is lost. It was this state that the Nephites were left in at the close of the Book of Mormon (Moroni 9:7-10).

Verse ten, of this chapter, ends with the Lord exclaiming that He will execute judgement on them, the house of Israel, by scattering their remnant in the winds. The wind typically symbolizes the spirit, the breath of life, and the power of God. It is also used to symbolize the intangible, transient, insubstantial, and elusive. It can also represent

the whole earth by considering the common term "*the four winds*". The four winds are the north, south, east, and west winds. The four cardinal directions symbolize and encompass the whole earth. As previously discussed in verse two, those that survived the attack by the Babylonians were taken captive. This was the beginning of the scattering of the Lord's people throughout all the nations of the earth. Truly, the Lord's people were scattered throughout the Four Corners of the earth. They can be found on every continent and throughout all walks of life.

**Verse 11:** "Wherefore, as I live, saith the Lord GOD; Surely, because thou hast defiled my sanctuary with all thy detestable things, and with all thine abominations, therefore will I also diminish thee; neither shall mine eye spare, neither will I have any pity."

The Lord starts this verse with a rather interesting phrase. He states, "*as I live, saith the Lord*". Since the Lord is eternal, having no beginning or end, the phrase "*as I live*" is an absolute. There never was, nor will there be, a time that the Lord does not live. Given this, the following is then guaranteed to occur. It is more or less a condition for the Lord's word which is met beyond definition.

Before further commentary is made as to this verse it is important that several terms are defined. The following terms are used in the verse or related to it. The American Heritage Dictionary defines these terms as follows.

**Abhor** v. **1.** To regard with horror or loathing.

**Abhorrence** n. **1.** One that is disgusting, loathsome, or repellent **2.** A feeling of repugnance or loathsome.

**Defile** v. **1.** To make filthy or dirty; pollute **2.** To debase the pureness or excellence of; corrupt **3.** To profane or sully **4.** To make unclean or unfit for ceremonial use; desecrate **5.** To violate the chastity of.

**Detestable** adj. **1.** Inspiring or deserving abhorrence or scorn. Synonym for hateful.

**Sanctuary** v. **1.** A sacred place such as a church, temple, or mosque **2.** The holiest part of a sacred place.

For further clarification, the verse could be explained as follow. "*Surely, you have made My temple (the holiest place on the face of the earth) filthy. You have done this by performing acts that have debased*

*the pureness of My house. You have performed all manner of unfit and unholy acts therein. Such conduct is loathsome to Me, and causes Me great disgust."*

The Lord clearly defines the main cause for His anger by saying that because His children have defiled His sanctuary, He will diminish them. What was Israel's Holy place of the Lord was His house that was only to be entered by a worthy high priest of the Lord. Within the holy room called the Holy of Holies, or sanctuary. It was here that the Lord dwelt. The Israelites viewed the Temple as the literal earthly abode of God the Eternal Father. It was the center of the earth, and the holiest place upon the face thereof. Given the fact that the Israelites had begun the worship of other gods in the Lord's temple and ignored the code of purity associated with the temple, it makes sense that the Lord was angered. To top this off, the Israelites proceeded to break every other law the Lord had given them



**Solomon's Temple**

sanctuary? The temple. To us it was a sacred by a worthy high temple was a the inner Lord symbolically

In response to the Israelites' transgressions, the Lord states that He will diminish them. In other words, the Lord was going to take away from them the many blessings that they had been given. Furthermore, His eye would not spare, nor would He have pity on them. The eye represents omnipresence, the all-seeing deity, and the state of all-knowing. It represents perfect knowledge. There were evidently no Israelites who had transgressed the laws of God that were spared from His wrath. The Lord took no pity, nor could he. He had promised these consequences hundreds of years before. Moses taught, *"But thou shalt remember the LORD thy God: for it is he that giveth thee power to get wealth, that he may establish his covenant which he sware unto thy fathers, as it is this day. And it shall be, if thou do at all forget the LORD thy God, and walk after other gods, and serve them, and worship them, I testify against you this day that ye shall surely perish. As the nations which the LORD destroyeth before your face, so shall ye perish; because ye would not be obedient unto the voice of the LORD your God"* (Deuteronomy 8:18-20).



In another passage in the Old Testament, we read of the Lord's clear warning to the children of Israel. It reads, *"But if ye will not hearken unto me, and will not do all these commandments; And if ye shall despise my statutes, or if your soul abhor my judgments, so that ye will not do all my commandments, but that ye break my covenant: I also will do this unto you; I will even appoint over you terror, consumption, and the burning ague, that shall consume the eyes, and cause sorrow of heart: and ye shall sow your seed in vain, for your enemies shall eat it. And I will set my face against you, and ye shall be slain before your*

*enemies: they that hate you shall reign over you; and ye shall flee when none pursueth you. And if ye will not yet for all this hearken unto me, then I will punish you seven times more for your sins. And I will break the pride of your power; and I will make your heaven as iron, and your earth as brass: And your strength shall be spent in vain: for your land shall not yield her increase, neither shall the trees of the land yield their fruits. And if ye walk contrary unto me, and will not hearken unto me; I will bring seven times more plagues upon you according to your*



### Artistic Painting of the Siege of Jerusalem by the Babylonians

*sins... And if ye will not for all this hearken unto me, but walk contrary unto me; Then I will walk contrary unto you also in fury; and I, even I, will chastise you seven times for your sins. And ye shall eat the flesh of your sons, and the flesh of your daughters shall ye eat. And I will destroy your high places, and cut down your images, and cast your carcasses upon the carcasses of your idols, and my soul shall abhor you. And I will make your cities waste, and bring your sanctuaries unto desolation, and I will not smell the savour of your sweet odours. And I will bring the land into desolation: and your enemies which dwell therein shall be astonished at it. And I will scatter you among the heathen, and will draw out a sword after you: and your land shall be desolate, and your cities waste” (Leviticus 26:14-33).*

**Verse 12:** “**A third part of thee shall die with the pestilence, and with famine shall they be consumed in the midst of thee: and a third part shall fall by the sword round about thee; and I will**

**scatter a third part into all the winds, and I will draw out a sword after them.”**

This verse serves as an answer and reiteration to verses one and two of the chapter. It gives an answer to the symbolism used in verse two where the Lord speaks of a third part of the inhabitants being burned with fire. This verse indicates that the fire represents the pestilence and famine that would kill many in the city. The dictionary defines pestilence and famine as follows.

**Pestilence** n. **1. a.** A usually fatal epidemic disease, especially bubonic plague **b.** An epidemic of such a disease **2.** A pernicious, evil influence or agent.

**Famine** n. **1.** A dramatic, wide reaching food shortage **2.** A drastic shortage or dearth **3.** Severe starvation or hunger **4.** Extreme hunger.

The city of Jerusalem experienced extreme famine during the siege by the Babylonians. The famine brought about disease, and pestilence.

**Verse 13:** **“Thus shall mine anger be accomplished, and I will cause my fury to rest upon them, and I will be comforted: and they shall know that I the LORD have spoken it in my zeal, when I have accomplished my fury in them.”**

Several terms in this verse need to be defined in order to better understand this verse. The American Heritage Dictionary defines the terms; *“fury”*, *“anger”*, and *“zeal”* as follows.

**Fury** n. **1.** Violent anger; rage. Synonymous with anger

**Anger** n. **1.** A strong feeling of displeasure or hostility

**Zeal** n. **1.** Enthusiastic devotion to a cause, an idea or a goal and tireless diligence in its furtherance.

After successfully humbling His children, and destroying their idols and defiled places, the displeasure and hostility of the Lord was accomplished. His eyes would no longer look upon His children in disgust because the cause of His disgust had been removed. The Lord's anger was accomplished in tireless diligence. That is His way. Modern day scripture records, *“And the Lord God has spoken it; and honor,*

power and glory be rendered to his holy name, both now and ever. Amen” (Doctrine and Covenants 20:36).

**Verse 14:** “**Moreover I will make thee waste, and a reproach among the nations that are round about thee, in the sight of all that pass by.**”

Great was the price that the children of God would pay for their sins. Not only would they pay during the Babylonian siege, but for years to come. They would be hated among men, who all would look upon them with reproach. The American Heritage Dictionary defines “reproach” as follows.

**Reproach** v. **1.** To express disapproval of, criticism of or disappointment in someone **2.** To bring shame upon; disgrace.

The Lord further explained this fact later on in the Book of Ezekiel where He says, “*Thou art become guilty in thy blood that thou hast shed; and hast defiled thyself in thine idols which thou hast made; and thou hast caused thy days to draw near, and art come even unto thy years: therefore have I made thee a reproach unto the heathen, and a mocking to all countries*” (Ezekiel 22:4).

Moses had taught the Israelites that in the day that they transgressed the Lord's commandments He would “...*make your cities waste, and bring your sanctuaries unto desolation, and,*” He “*will not smell the savour of your sweet odours*” (Leviticus 26:31). Basically, Israel was cut off from the Lord's blessings.

In great fulfillment, the prophet Nehemiah wrote after Jerusalem's fall, “*Ye see the distress that we are in, how Jerusalem lieth waste, and the gates thereof are burned with fire: come, and let us build up the wall of Jerusalem, that we be no more a reproach*” (Nehemiah 2:17). History has shown that the Jews have undergone this curse for centuries of time.

**Verse 15:** “**So it shall be a reproach and a taunt, an instruction and an astonishment unto the nations that are round about thee, when I shall execute judgments in thee in anger and in fury and in furious rebukes. I the LORD have spoken it.**”

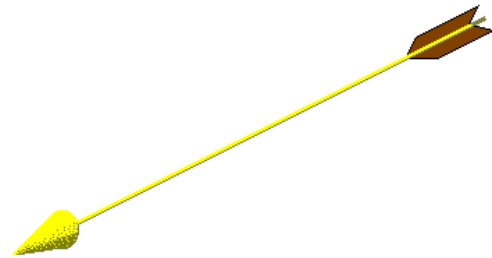
Not only were the children of Israel to be considered a reproach among men, but they were also to be classified as a taunt. The dictionary defines a “taunt” as follows.

**Taunt** v. **1.** To reproach in a mocking, insulting, or contemptuous manner. Synonymous with ridicule.

There was no doubt a purpose for this act. Even the prophet Jeremiah wrote, "And I will deliver them to be removed into all the kingdoms of the earth for their hurt, to be a reproach and a proverb, a taunt and a curse, in all places whither I shall drive them" (Jeremiah 24:9). What were the Lord's purposes? No doubt there were many. Some of which we probably don't even know. This verse does give us at least one purpose that the Lord would accomplish. The nations of the world would be taught through Israel's rebuke. People for thousands of years would read, study, and observe the dealings of the Lord with His children and soon realize that the Lord will not tolerate the transgressing of His laws.

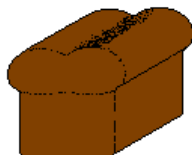
**Verse 16:** "When I shall send upon them the evil arrows of famine, which shall be for their destruction, and which I will send to destroy you: and I will increase the famine upon you, and will break your staff of bread:"

This verse reiterates the pestilence and famine that would come upon Jerusalem during the siege by the Babylonians. The Lord said that He would send the evil arrows of famine upon them. Arrows usually symbolize power and war. An arrow in flight symbolizes the ascent to the celestial realm. A loosed arrow symbolizes consequences, which cannot be revoked or recalled. A loosed arrow is often seen as punishment from God.



The famine in Jerusalem truly did bring about the Israelites' fall. The Babylonians basically starved the city to the brink of death, and then breached its walls. Many people died of starvation. Those that were left were so weakened that they had little strength left to defend their homes. The destruction was great.

The Lord clarifies that the famine would cause an extreme shortage of food. He states, using symbolic terminology, I "**will break your staff of bread**". The staff symbolizes pilgrimage. It also symbolizes power and authority. In Biblical accountings, it is mostly



associated with the good shepherd who used that staff to tend his flocks. Using this application, it represents support, guidance, and substance or sustaining. Bread symbolizes life. It is associated with food in general and represents the life sustaining



properties of food. Breaking the staff of bread then symbolizes the severing of the substance or support of food. The Israelites would be cut off from the physical substances that were required to sustain life.

**Verse 17:** "So will I send upon you famine and evil beasts, and they shall bereave thee; and pestilence and blood shall pass through thee; and I will bring the sword upon thee. I the LORD have spoken it."

In this verse, the Lord states that not only will He send famine but He will also send evil beasts against Jerusalem. When one hears the term "*evil beasts*" the mental picture of animals comes to mind. Here the term "*beasts*" is being used symbolically. Beasts symbolize primordial chaos, the fearsome terrifying powers of nature, chaotic forces in the world and in man's own nature; pestilence or destructive forces. The term could be used to symbolize disease and pestilence that accompanied the famine. It could also be used to symbolize the Babylonians. In either case, both were present. The fact that they were evil might point to the Babylonians. The term "*evil*" is defined in the American Heritage Dictionary as follows.

**Evil** adj. **1.** Morally bad or wrong, wicked.

Further supporting the theory that the evil beasts were the Babylonians, the Lord's prophet writes, "*and they shall bereave thee*". Turning to the dictionary for clarification, the term bereave is defined as follows.

**Bereave** v. **1.** To leave desolate or alone, especially by death **2.** To take (something valuable or necessary) by force.

The footnotes in the accepted scriptures by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints says, "*Bereave i.e. deprived of children*". Though this is an accepted use of the word bereave, the term is probably referencing the fact that the Babylonians desolated the city. They took all that was valuable by force. The city was left empty through death and deportation. It is this fact that the Lord makes reference to through His prophet when He says "*Pestilence and Blood shall pass through thee*". Blood symbolizes life principal; strength; rejuvenating force, and life in general. The appearance of blood can also represent death.

Of this time, the prophet John recorded, "*And I looked, and behold a pale horse: and his name that sat on him was Death, and Hell*

*followed with him. And power was given unto them over the fourth part of the earth, to kill with sword, and with hunger, and with death, and with the beasts of the earth” (The Book of the Revelation of St. John the Divine 6:8).* The pale horse whose rider was death represented the Babylonians. Jerusalem stands as a witness to the rule which Babylonia inflicted over the earth; it was a rule of death, starvation, deportation, slavery, and wickedness.

As a final closure to the chapter, the Lord clarifies that even though His prophets might have spoken the words recorded in the chapter, the Lord had directed it. They were His words.



**Chapter**

**Summary:**

This chapter could be called Jerusalem's slow and painful death. The Lord pronounces that Jerusalem would be destroyed through famine, pestilence, disease, and cannibalism. There would also be many who would die in battle against the Babylonians. The Lord explains that all of this is being brought to pass because of the sins of the Israelites. They had defiled the Lord's temple, and transgressed His laws. Their punishment would serve as testimony for all nations to see. They would become a hated and cursed society. Their nation would have no land and their citizens would be scattered throughout the world. In this, all of the Lord's words would be fulfilled.

