

## Chapter 13

**Date:** Between **August 13, 592 BC** (The 5<sup>th</sup> of Elul, 3,169) & **July 8, 591 BC** (The 10<sup>th</sup> of AB, 3,170)

**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 of 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 even outright wicked. It should be noted that it was around this time period that Lehi left Jerusalem. We know through the Book of Mormon record that this time period in Jerusalem was one of many false prophets, and people seeking their own gain. During this same time period, Nebuchadnezzar was involved in the expansion and beautification of Babylonia.

**Preview:** In this chapter, the prophet Ezekiel receives communication and instruction from on High. The Lord instructs him to preach unto the false prophets and inhabitants of Jerusalem and warn them about the dangers of and His displeasure with the false prophecy among them. He tells of prophets that preach according to their own desires and not the desires of God. They tell the inhabitants what they want to hear, while they have received no divine revelation. The Lord instructs the prophet to give the parable of the jackals and the wall, which conveys the idea that the false prophets are destroying Israel's protection. The Lord also instructs the prophet

to speak out against those that practice preistcraft among the Hebrews. If one were to give this chapter a title, this chapter might be named something to the effect, "*Woe unto the false priests and those that bear false witness*".



**Verse 1:** “**And the word of the LORD came unto me, saying,**”

This chapter could be a continuation of chapter twelve, making it a continuation of a previous revelation from the Lord to the prophet Ezekiel. It could also be another set of revelations given in a series of revelations that began in chapter twelve. In either case, this verse identifies the source of the revelation contained hereafter as the Lord himself. It also identifies the recipient as Ezekiel, the Lord's prophet in Babylon.

It should be noted that most all of the incidents in which Ezekiel references the Lord are translated from the Hebrew word "**YHWH**" meaning Jehovah. Jehovah is the name used for the God of the Old Testament. Jehovah is also the name by which Christ was known in his pre-earth existence. This relationship has been debated by men of the past and present. Many confuse the name Jehovah with God the Father. This confusion stems from the fact that many don't think of Jesus Christ as a God, but rather the Son of a God. Jesus Christ himself understood that he was the God of the Old Testament. In the Gospel of John, Christ said, speaking of himself, "*Before Abraham was, I AM (John 8:54-58)*". We should remember that the God of the Old Testament referred to himself using the same terminology. In the Book of Exodus we read, "*I AM hath sent me unto you (Exodus 3:14)*". This knowledge helps us understand just who is communicating with the prophet Ezekiel.



**Jesus Christ,  
Jehovah or YHWH**

**Verse 2:** “**Son of man, prophesy against the prophets of Israel that prophesy, and say thou unto them that prophesy out of their own hearts. Hear ye the word of the LORD:**”

We know from verse one that the Lord is speaking to the prophet Ezekiel, but this verse explains to whom the Lord's words were

directed. The Lord was directing the words of this revelation towards the false prophets of Israel and those who followed them. The prophet Ezekiel was to prophesy against them. The term prophesy means to predict the future or interpret the past and present with the help of divine intervention. Ezekiel was to predict the future of those prophets in Israel who prophesied "**out of their own hearts**". In other words, those prophets who prophesied using their own will and not using the direction and inspiration of God. To those individuals the Lord says, "*hear my word*". Isn't it ironic that those so-called prophets have to be commanded to hear the word of the Lord?

Many feel that the Hebrew word used to translate the term "**prophesy**", when used in reference to the actions of the false prophets, might be a transcription error. The Hebrew word for prophesy is apparently similar to another Hebrew word that means, "*to rant*". This theory is unsubstantiated; however, it is preferred by many since they cannot associate false prophets with prophesy.

The Book of Mormon dealt with much the same problems that are being touched on in this verse. From time to time, they too had individuals who preached after their own desires and not after the will of God. The Book of Mormon prophet Heleman wrote, "*... if a prophet come among you and declareth unto you the word of the Lord, which testifieth of your sins and iniquities, ye are angry with him, and cast him out and seek all manner of ways to destroy him; yea, you will say that he is a false prophet, and that he is a sinner, and of the devil, because he testifieth that your deeds are evil... O ye wicked and ye perverse generation; ye hardened and ye stiffnecked people, how long will ye suppose that the Lord will suffer you? Yea, how long will ye suffer yourselves to be led by foolish and blind guides? Yea, how long will ye choose darkness rather than light? Yea, behold, the anger of the Lord is already kindled against you; behold, he hath cursed the land because of your iniquity. And behold, the time cometh that he curseth your riches, that they become slippery, that ye cannot hold them; and in the days of your poverty ye cannot retain them. And in the days of your poverty ye shall cry unto the Lord; and in vain shall ye cry, for your desolation is already come upon you, and your destruction is made sure; and then shall ye weep and howl in that day, saith the Lord of Hosts. And then shall ye lament, and say: O that I had repented, and had not killed the prophets, and stoned them, and cast them out. Yea, in that day ye shall say: O that we had remembered the Lord our God in the day that he gave us our riches, and then they would not have become slippery that we should lose them; for behold, our riches are gone from us. Behold, we lay a tool here and on the morrow it is gone; and behold, our swords are taken from us in the day we have sought them for battle. Yea, we have hid up our treasures and they have slipped away from us, because of the curse of the land. O that we had*

*repented in the day that the word of the Lord came unto us; for behold the land is cursed, and all things are become slippery, and we cannot hold them... for ye have sought all the days of your lives for that which ye could not obtain; and ye have sought for happiness in doing iniquity, which thing is contrary to the nature of that righteousness which is in our great and Eternal Head” (Heleman 13:26-38).* Amazingly enough, this passage from the Book of Heleman could easily pass for additional verses in this chapter of Ezekiel. Given the similarities, it acts as additional commentary for the chapter.

**Verse 3:** **“Thus saith the Lord GOD: Woe unto the foolish prophets, that follow their own spirit, and have seen nothing!”**

The Lord starts this verse by leaving no question as to from whom the following message comes. He himself is the author of the warnings contained hereafter, and as an introduction to those warnings, He uses the word "*woe*". The term *woe* is used as a noun to convey the idea of deep distress or misery, as from grief. It is synonymous with regret. Alternatively, it can mean misfortune, calamity, and destruction. It can also be an expression of extreme warning.

The warning, though directed at all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, was specifically directed at the foolish prophets of Jerusalem. The term "*foolish*" prophets could also be translated as "*villainous*" prophets. Both terms can be translated from the Hebrew word "*nabal*". This Hebrew word carries the idea of moral and religious depravation. We might say the phrase "*foolish prophets*" in this application could be the equivalent to what we would label as "*false prophets*". The arrogant men and women who fell into this category had obviously been teaching the Jerusalemites what they wanted to hear. They followed their own spirit or desires rather than the desires of God. When Ezekiel wrote that they "*followed their own spirit*", we should understand that that means they followed their own desires, wishes, ideas, whims, will and mind.

The Book of Mormon prophet Nephi, who came from the very same society that Ezekiel was prophesying against, prophesied, "*Yea, and there shall be many which shall teach after this manner, false and vain and foolish doctrines, and shall be puffed up in their hearts, and shall seek deep to hide their counsels from the Lord; and their works shall be in the dark” (2<sup>nd</sup> Nephi 28:9).* Furthermore, he said, "*...they will say: All is well in Zion; yea, Zion prospereth, all is well--and thus the devil cheateth their souls, and leadeth them away carefully down to hell” (2<sup>nd</sup> Nephi 28:21).* If such were the case, why then would man choose such a path? Why would they teach a doctrine that would result in damnation? Again we turn to Nephi for our answer. In a powerful

passage of deep emotion, we read, "*O that cunning plan of the evil one! O the vainness, and the frailties, and the foolishness of men! When they are learned they think they are wise, and they hearken not unto the counsel of God, for they set it aside, supposing they know of themselves, wherefore, their wisdom is foolishness and it profiteth them not. And they shall perish. But to be learned is good if they hearken unto the counsels of God. But wo unto the rich, who are rich as to the things of the world. For because they are rich they despise the poor, and they persecute the meek, and their hearts are upon their treasures; wherefore, their treasure is their God. And behold, their treasure shall perish with them also*" (2<sup>nd</sup> Nephi 9:28-30).

**Verse 4:** "O Israel, thy prophets are like the foxes in the deserts."

This verse starts with an almost plea like call from the Lord. He calls to His children, "**O Israel**", like a loving father pleading with a wayward son. His plea is as though he is asking the simple question, "don't you see what is happening?", though it is phrased as a parable. He says that Jerusalem's prophets are like foxes in the deserts.

In order to understand the Lord's parable, we must first recognize that when the Lord says "*thy prophets*" they are not His prophets. They are false prophets who listen to the counsel of the adversary rather than the voice of God. Once this is understood, the symbols in the parable will have perspective.

The term "*fox*" comes from the Hebrew word pronounced

"*shu'al*". Rather than our modern day fox, it probably refers to an animal called a jackal. In almost all Old Testament passages referencing the word fox, the jackal is the actual term. In the ancient Holy Lands, jackals could be heard every



night in the villages. They were common animals in the area and survived as scavengers. A jackal looks like a medium size dog, with a head like a wolf. He is typically bright yellow in color. Jackals devour bodies of the dead. They have even been known to dig up the dead from their graves. Given this they are thought of as unclean beasts and are typically used as symbols of death, desperation, uncleanness, and wickedness. This symbolism alone paints a pretty graphic picture;



however, the symbolism broadens as one understands the full scope of a jackals life. A leading scholar on the writings of Ezekiel wrote, "*Jackals scavenge in ruins; the sight of them making, or enlarging, breaches in tumbled walls was familiar. They thus benefit from and*

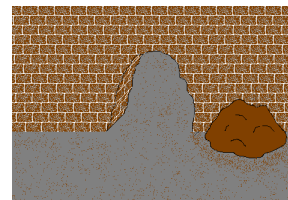
*contribute to ruin. Israel, a religio-moral ruin, teams with Jackal-prophets who batten on the decay, and by telling the people what they want to hear, hasten the end*" (Ezekiel, Chapters 1-20, Moeshe Greenberg, page 236).

The term "desert" typically symbolizes desolation and emptiness. It can also symbolize abandonment, a place of contemplation, quietness, and divine revelation. An alternate translation of the term "desert" from the Hebrew might be "ruins". The translation as "ruins" fits in perfectly with the lifestyle of the jackal, connecting our symbolism. Either way the symbolic connotations would be the same.

In summary, the false prophets of Jerusalem are like scavenging jackals that seek only after their own desires. They destroy and leave in ruin every place that they have been. They destroy all that is good and wholesome, leaving only the rubble (i.e. destroyed lives) in their path. The false prophets of Jerusalem fed upon the weakness of the city, expanding them at every opportunity.

**Verse 5:** "Ye have not gone up into the gaps, neither made up the hedge for the house of Israel to stand in the battle in the day of the LORD."

The parable begun in verse four takes further shape in verse five. The Lord says that the jackals have "not" gone up into the gaps. One of the possible definitions of a gap is a break in a wall. Based on evidence presented hereafter, this is the most likely definition for the word "gap" in the application of this chapter. The Hebrew translation might have also read "*ye have not gone up into the breaches*". Furthermore, the Lord says that neither had the jackals made up the hedge. A hedge is somewhat similar to a wall. A hedge is a line of people, plants, or objects that make a boundary of some type. A hedge can be a brick wall or a dirt mound. It could also be closely planted shrubs that have grown in the form of wall. It would



appear that a wall or barrier is being introduced into the parable as another symbol.

Ancient Israel, and the cultures of the ancient Near East, would typically build stone or brick fences or walls around cultivated fields, vineyards, cities or other locations of value. The walls were built to protect the locations against the elements, thieves, and other such enemies that might destroy the fruits of their labor or the homes and businesses that they had built. Walls are often used symbolically to represent protection, strength, and deterrence.

The Lord has previously used the symbolism of the wall when referring to Israel. The great prophet Isaiah wrote many years before Ezekiel, "*...I will tell you what I will do to my vineyard: I will take away the hedge thereof, and it shall be eaten up; and break down the wall thereof, and it shall be trodden down (Isaiah 5:5)*". He also wrote, "*Therefore this iniquity shall be to you as a breach ready to fall, swelling out in a high wall, whose breaking cometh suddenly at an instant*" (Isaiah 30:13).

What is the wall that Ezekiel and the Lord are speaking of in this verse and chapter? Obviously, the symbolic interpretations given previously, for the wall, are applicable here; however, the symbols are much more specific. The wall references Jerusalem's physical and literal protections extending from the city walls, to the geographical protections, to God's protective power or spirit. The latter being the most important and significant in this application. The true strength of Jerusalem's walls is the power of the Lord. That power was however conditional. It existed so long as the Hebrews were righteous and adhered to God's words. The foxes/jackals represented the false prophets of Israel, who taught the people that adherence to God's laws were not necessary. They symbolically weakened and destroyed the walls of Israel. The verse seems to pose the question, in the day that the wall of Israel was really needed, where were the false prophets? They had not helped reinforce the wall, but only degraded it. Where were they when Israel was threatened? The Book of Mormon prophet Alma wrote, "*...thus we see that the devil will not support his children...*" (Alma 30:60). How true do Alma's words sound in respects to this situation.

Based on historical facts, we know that the Lord eventually brought the great Babylonian army against Jerusalem. This occurred approximately four to five years after this chapter was written. The Lord is obviously issuing a very necessary warning, for in the year 587 BC, Jerusalem would face the greatest siege it had ever seen. The question will then be asked, where are the false prophets that once promised them peace and protection?

**Verse 6:** “They have seen vanity and lying divination, saying, The LORD saith: and the LORD hath not sent them: and they have made others to hope that they would confirm the word.”

This verse begins with the phrase, "*they have seen vanity and lying divination*", from the Hebrew we might better say, "*they utter idle visions and false revelation*". How have they done this? The Lord explains that it is because they have presented themselves before the people of Jerusalem as the voice of the Lord, but they weren't. They were not authorized by the Lord to speak for him. Even so, they led the Israelites to believe not only in their words, but their divinity as well. The Israelites believed so wholeheartedly that they sat back and awaited their fulfillment. Ezekiel writes that the Israelites had hope that the false prophets would confirm their words. The word "*confirm*" in this instant can also be translated as "*substantiate*". In other words, the citizens of Israel sat idle, giving no heed to the warnings issued by true prophets, and awaited the fulfillment of the prophecies that were more appealing to them uttered by false prophets. They had faith in the words of the false prophets, and consequently, they found themselves powerless against the Lord.

This verse mentions the term "*divination*". This word is defined by the American Heritage Dictionary as follows.

**Divination** *n.* The art or act of foretelling future events or revealing occult knowledge by means of augury or an alleged supernatural agency.

Divination is closely associated with the term "*sorcery*" which is similarly defined as follows.

**Sorcery** *n.* Use of supernatural power over others through the assistance of spirits; witchcraft.

Apparently, certain individuals in Jerusalem had become involved in satanic and occult like practices. They had adopted practices associated with witchcraft, sorcery, fortune-telling, and other practices, which claimed power beyond mortal capabilities without any association with the God of this world. They apparently used such practices to lead the children of Israel astray and to achieve personal gain. The methods used by these people to reveal future events or hidden knowledge was not only not endorsed by God, but its power was limited. The Lord refers to the divination of these people as false and their visions idle. Though they might have impressed many people in Israel, and quite possibly even have been considered a prophet among the people, the bottom line was they were false prophets.



This verse brings up an interesting question. How can we identify false prophets? These men obviously deceived many intelligent people. How can we make sure that we don't make the same mistake? Probably the first step is to remember the plain and precious principles the Lord taught the prophet Joseph Smith when he said, "*But ye are commanded in all things to ask of God, who giveth liberally; and that which the Spirit testifies unto you even so I would that ye should do in all holiness of heart, walking uprightly before me, considering the end of your salvation, doing all things with prayer and thanksgiving, that ye may not be seduced by evil spirits, or doctrines of devils, or the commandments of men; for some are of men, and others of devils*" (Doctrine & Covenants 46:7). Though we are commanded to have faith in the Lord's anointed, we must remember that we are also commanded to ask God in all things.

We should also consider the actions of the prophet. If a prophet is sent of God, he will be accompanied by His spirit and power. His words will all come to fruition, not just a portion of them. The prophet Jeremiah, Ezekiel's contemporary in Jerusalem, wrote, "*The prophets that have been before me and before thee of old prophesied both against many countries, and against great kingdoms, of war, and of evil, and of pestilence. The prophet which prophesieth of peace, when the word of the prophet shall come to pass, then shall the prophet be known, that the LORD hath truly sent him*" (Jeremiah 28:8-9).

**Verse 7:** **"Have ye not seen a vain vision, and have ye not spoken a lying divination, whereas ye say, The LORD saith it; albeit I have not spoken?"**

Before this verse is discussed, a couple of terms should be defined. The term "vain" could be translated as "idle" or "worthless". The term "albiet" is an older term used in the place of the modern term "although". Finally, the word "lying" could also be translated as "false".

This verse is basically a rhetorical question posed by the Lord. Basically, He asks the false prophets, "*haven't you seen worthless visions, and haven't you proclaimed revelations that were little more than lies? You have even said that the revelations have come from Me when I have not spoken or revealed them to you*". The false prophets of Israel were not only bold enough to proclaim lies to its citizens, but also had the nerve to do it in the name of the Lord.

**Verse 8:** **"Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD; Because ye have spoken vanity, and seen lies, therefore, behold, I am against you, saith the Lord GOD."**

The Lord starts this verse with the word "therefore", meaning because of the information presented in verses one through seven, basically the vanity and lies that the false prophets have spoken, the Lord will invoke the action listed in the balance of this verse. It is probably important to point out that the term vanity could also have been translated as folly, meaning to lack in good sense, understanding, or foresight. It might also be translated as "*idle things*" when translated from the Hebrew. The phrase "*seen lies*" could be translated from the Hebrew as "*uttered false visions*". Somehow the translators of Ezekiel's writing took the foreign word for vision and translated it into the English word seen. This causes some confusion to the basic reader of the Bible.

The Doctrine and Covenants warns us of the latter days of people like those spoken of in this verse in Ezekiel. It is recorded, "*Yea, he saith unto them: Deceive and lie in wait to catch, that ye may destroy; behold, this is no harm. And thus he flattereth them, and telleth them that it is no sin to lie that they may catch a man in a lie, that they may destroy him*" (Doctrine & Covenants 10:25).

**Verse 9:** **“And mine hand shall be upon the prophets that see vanity, and that divine lies: they shall not be in the assembly of my people, neither shall they be written in the writing of the house of Israel, neither shall they enter into the land of Israel; and ye shall know that I am the Lord GOD.”**

This verse starts off by speaking of the Lord's hand. The term "**hand**" can have many symbolic uses. In this passage, it probably represents the power, vengeance, wrath, and influence of the Lord. The hand is often a representation of a higher power. God's hand redeems, bestows blessings, offers or denies protection, or inflicts His wrath. As a consequence to Israel's actions, the Lord promises to place His hand, or vengeance, upon them who have sinned against Him.



Again, the Lord makes specific mention of those individuals who have "*seen vanity*" and "*divined lies*". We know that the term "*seen*" should have been translated as "*vision*" and the term "*vanity*" means "*idle*" or "*worthless*". The term "*divine*" implies revelation or knowledge received by supernatural or diety like power. The term "*lies*" could also be translated as "*falsehood*", hence they reveal false revelation.

The passage continues by saying that the individuals spoken of in this verse and previous verses shall not be "*written in the writing of the house of Israel*". According to Moeshe Greenberg, this phrase could also be translated from the Hebrew as "*listed in the register of the*

*house of Israel*". According to most secular scholars this passage is referring to the genealogical list kept in the temple. It is the author's opinion that this passage brings up an interesting question. Did the children of Israel have to meet a certain standard to enter the Lord's house? Upon meeting this standard, and having demonstrated this to their religious leaders, was their name then placed on a list in the temple giving them access to that holy structure? We know that the Lord forbids any strangers or unclean individuals from entering His house. If this were so, how else could they enforce or regulate such a law? In either case, the Lord seems to be clear that Israel's sins will not only result in the loss of access to the temple for those individuals, and future generations as well, but Israel will lose all of their inheritance.

Another theory on the exact meaning of this passage stems from the Book of Revelation. In that often misunderstood work, the Apostle John makes reference to the "*Book of Life*". This book was a symbolic representation of the fact that the Lord God keeps tract of all actions of men, and only those that are worthy of His presence will be allowed to return to Him. Symbolically, He keeps written record of those who qualify for that great reward. Note that Ezekiel makes mention of the fact that those individuals who have transgressed against Him will not only be removed from written record of His house, but they will not be included in, as He says, the "assembly of my people". On the surface this again makes reference to the fact that those gathered in the temple were often referred to as an assembly. Figuratively, it could refer to exaltation, and not being included in the Lord's family or assembly. Which ever is the case, either one carries the idea of not being numbered among the children of God. The false prophets of Israel were obviously losing this right.

It is probably important at this point to notice the similarities between this chapter of Ezekiel and the twenty-third chapter of the Book of Jeremiah. Jeremiah recorded the following.

*"Mine heart within me is broken because of the prophets... For the land is full of adulterers... For both prophet and priest are profane; yea, in my house have I found their wickedness, saith the LORD... they prophesied in Baal, and caused my people Israel to err. I have seen also in the prophets of Jerusalem an horrible thing: they commit adultery, and walk in lies: they strengthen also the hands of evildoers, that none doth return from his wickedness: they are all of them unto me as Sodom, and the inhabitants thereof as Gomorrah... for from the prophets of Jerusalem is profaneness gone forth into all the land. Thus saith the LORD of hosts, Hearken not unto the words of the*

*prophets that prophesy unto you: they make you vain: they speak a vision of their own heart, and not out of the mouth of the LORD. They say still unto them that despise me, The LORD hath said, Ye shall have peace; and they say unto every one that walketh after the imagination of his own heart, No evil shall come upon you. For who hath stood in the counsel of the LORD, and hath perceived and heard his word? who hath marked his word, and heard it? Behold, a whirlwind of the LORD is gone forth in fury, even a grievous whirlwind: it shall fall grievously upon the head of the wicked ... I have not sent these prophets, yet they ran: I have not spoken to them, yet they prophesied. But if they had stood in my counsel, and had caused my people to hear my words, then they should have turned them from their evil way, and from the evil of their doings. Am I a God at hand, saith the LORD, and not a God afar off? Can any hide himself in secret places that I shall not see him? saith the LORD. Do not I fill heaven and earth? saith the LORD. I have heard what the prophets said, that prophesy lies in my name, saying, I have dreamed, I have dreamed. How long shall this be in the heart of the prophets that prophesy lies? yea, they are prophets of the deceit of their own heart; Which think to cause my people to forget my name by their dreams which they tell every man to his neighbour, as their fathers have forgotten my name for Baal. The prophet that hath a dream, let him tell a dream; and he that hath my word, let him speak my word faithfully. What is the chaff to the wheat? saith the LORD. Is not my word like as a fire? saith the LORD; and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces? Therefore, behold, I am against the prophets, saith the LORD, that steal my words every one from his neighbour. Behold, I am against the prophets, saith the LORD, that use their tongues, and say, He saith. Behold, I am against them that prophesy false dreams, saith the LORD, and do tell them, and cause my people to err by their lies, and by their lightness; yet I sent them not, nor commanded them: therefore they shall not profit this people at all, saith the LORD... ye have perverted the words of the living God, of the LORD of hosts our God...Therefore, behold, I, even I, will utterly forget you, and I will forsake you, and the city that I gave you and your fathers, and cast you out of my presence: And I will bring an everlasting reproach*

*upon you, and a perpetual shame, which shall not be forgotten (Jeremiah 23:9-40)."*

**Verse 10:** **"Because, even because they have seduced my people, saying, Peace; and there was no peace; and one built up a wall, and, lo, others daubed it with untempered mortar:"**

The greater sin of the false prophets of Israel was not their own shortcomings but the fact that they seduced the Lord's people. They were evidently not satisfied with their own damnation, and sought after the souls of those around them. Here the Lord uses the word seduce. The term "*seduced*" could also be translated as "*misled*". The word seduce is a verb defined by the American Heritage dictionary as, 1. To lead away from duty, principles or proper conduct 2. Win over; attract. The Book of Proverbs records, "*The righteous is more excellent than his neighbour: but the way of the wicked seduceth them*" (Proverbs 12:26).

The Lord says that the false prophets seduced the children of Israel by telling them that there is "***Peace; and there was no peace***". This phrase seems to bring to mind the 28<sup>th</sup> chapter of 2<sup>nd</sup> Nephi in the Book of Mormon, which reads, "*...Eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we die; and it shall be well with us. And there shall also be many which shall say: Eat, drink, and be merry; nevertheless, fear God--he will justify in committing a little sin; yea, lie a little, take the advantage of one because of his words, dig a pit for thy neighbor; there is no harm in this; and do all these things, for tomorrow we die; and if it so be that we are guilty, God will beat us with a few stripes, and at last we shall be saved in the kingdom of God*" (2<sup>nd</sup> Nephi 28:7-8).

Towards the end of the verse, the Lord refers back to his analogy of the wall. Now He adds a new dimension to the symbolic wall. He says the one built a wall, and another daubed it with untempered mortar. The term "*mortar*" could also be translated as "*plaster*". The symbolic nature of this term is associated with the symbolic meaning of a wall. Walls, as previously discussed, symbolize protection; however, untempered mud brick walls were weak. Untempered mud bricks were basically dried mud, sand, and straw. They were then pieced together with a substance called bitumen to form a wall. The untempered wall lacked a key step that would have given it strength, that being the fire of a furnace. The fire of the furnace melts the sand in tempered bricks giving them extreme strength. Without an outer coating to protect them against water, untempered mud bricks quickly crumble and decay under the surrounding environment. If untempered bricks were used, it required addition steps to protect the

integrity of the wall. In the Ancient Near East, it was a common practice to use untempered mud bricks and coat them with a layer of weatherproofing material. The term daub used in this verse is basically another word for coating. One authority wrote,

*"...reference is here made to 'cob-walls'; that is, walls which are made of beaten earth rammed into molds or boxes, to give shape and consistence, and then emptied from the molds, layer by layer, on the wall, where it dries as the work goes on. Such walls cannot stand the effects of the weather, and houses built on this principle soon crumple and decay... To protect them from the weather a very fine mortar is sometimes made, which is laid thickly on the outside of the walls. When this mortar is properly mixed with lime, it answers the purpose designed; but where the lime is left out, as is often the case, the 'untempered mortar' is no protection...Some commentators, however, translate taphel, which in our version is rendered 'untempered mortar' by the word 'whitewash'. They represent the idea of the text to be the figure of a wall of unendurable material, and coated, not with cement which might protect it, but with a mere thin coating of lime, which gives the wall a finished durable appearance, which its real character does not warrant" (Manners and Customs of the Bible, Freeman, page 302).*



Those that symbolically daubed the walls of Israel were the real protectors of Israel, yet the daubers of this age daubed with untempered mortar. In other words, they gave no real protection even though their actions might have appeared to do so.

For clarification, the following terms in this verse are defined by the American Heritage Dictionary.

**Mortar** *n.* Any of various bonding materials used in masonry, surfacing, and plastering, especially a plastic mixture of cement or lime, sand, and water that hardens in place and is used to bind together bricks or stones.

**Bitumen** *n.* Any of various flammable mixtures of hydrocarbons and other substances, occurring naturally or obtained by distillation from coal or petroleum, that are a component of asphalt and tar and are used for surfacing roads and for weather proofing.

**Plaster** *n.* A mixture of lime, of gypsum, sand, and water, sometimes with fiber added, that hardens to a smooth solid and is used for coating walls and ceilings.

The term "**daub**" is a verb meaning to cover or smear with a soft, adhesive substance, such as plaster, grease, or mud. The word comes from the Latin word "*dealbare*" meaning to whitewash. Mortar represents the small factors that influence a situation in life.



**Verse 11:** **“Say unto them which daub it with untempered mortar, that it shall fall: there shall be an overflowing shower; and ye, O great hailstones, shall fall; and a stormy wind shall rend it.”**

To those that gave Israel their "false" sense of security the Lord warns, Jerusalem shall fall. This is the message encrypted in the phrase *“Say unto them which daub it with untempered mortar, that it shall fall”*. The fruition of this prophecy was less than five years away. In the year 587 BC the Babylonians would march on Jerusalem and utterly destroy the city. Of this the Lord says figuratively that there will be an overflowing shower, a great hail, and a stormy wind. Obviously, these three items never literally happened at the time of Jerusalem’s

destruction. Once again, symbolic imagery is used to convey a point. The three symbolic phrases could be defined as follows.

**Overflowing shower** - The phrase "*an overflowing shower*" could better be translated as "*a driving rain*" or "*overwhelming rain*". It carries the idea of a powerful and forceful downpour. Rain typically symbolizes divine



blessings, the descent of heavenly influences, and purification. Given the circumstance in history surrounding this chapter and the contents of this chapter, it is probably a safe assumption to say that the symbolic rain spoken of here represents purification. One should keep in mind that purification, in the spiritual sense, is typically associated with physical trials, humbling experiences, the removal of God's blessings, and any other such occurrence that would cause one to repent of ungodly conduct. By the wording of this verse, the purification which the Lord promised Jerusalem was to be extensive, and extreme.

**Ye, O great hailstones** – The term hail or hailstone is somewhat common among prophetic scripture. In speaking of the calamities of the last days the prophet and apostle John wrote, "*And there fell upon men a great hail out of heaven, every stone about the weight of a talent: and men blasphemed God because of the plague of the hail; for the plague thereof was exceeding great. (Revelation 16:21)*". The word hail is used by John in this instance to represent the great wrath that shall be unleashed upon the wicked in the last days by the God of Heaven. John also used the term hail to represent the might and power of God. He wrote, "*And the temple of God was opened in heaven, and there was seen in his temple the ark of his testament: and there were lightnings, and voices, and thunderings, and an earthquake, and great hail*" (*Revelation 11:19*). The term hail can be used figuratively as well as literally. John might have very well been using the term in both forms. Both Mosiah and Joseph Smith wrote of a literal plague of hail in the last days. They wrote, "*And it shall come to pass that I will send forth hail among them, and it shall smite them...*" (*Mosiah 12:6*), "*And there shall be a great hailstorm sent forth to destroy the crops of the earth*" (*Doctrine & Covenants 29:16*).

In the case of the 11<sup>th</sup> verse of this chapter in Ezekiel, it would appear that the hailstones spoken of are symbolic. Based on historical records, there is not evidence that the destruction brought about by the Lord on Jerusalem was accompanied by actual hail. The term is probably used to describe the might and destructive forces of the Babylonian army.



**A stormy wind shall rend it** - Wind generally symbolizes messengers from God, the presence of divinity, the spirit, and the breath of life. Likewise, storms symbolize creative powers. It might be recalled from chapter one that the Lord referred to the Babylonian invasion using the symbolic terminology of "*the whirlwind from the North*". The term is used by Ezekiel to symbolically represent the force of the Babylonians and the fact that they were sent by the power and influence of God.

**Verse 12:** **“Lo, when the wall is fallen, shall it not be said unto you, Where is the daubing wherewith ye have daubed it?”**

The Lord starts this verse with an interesting word, "*lo*". Lo is an interjection used to attract attention to or to show surprise. The Lord points out in prophetic tense that the wall of Jerusalem is (or will be) fallen. At such point, the Lord tells the Hebrews that they will hear people asking, "*Where are the our*" (false) "*prophets now? Where are the Egyptians that were supposed to save us? Where is all the protection that the Lord promised to send?*" The problem is, the false prophets made promises to the children of Israel, on behalf of the Lord, which had no validity.

**Verse 13:** **“Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD; I will even rend it with a stormy wind in my fury; and there shall be an overflowing shower in mine anger, and great hailstones in my fury to consume it.”**

The Lord, through His prophet, continues to teach in somewhat parable like form. Here he speaks of the wall, which was discussed earlier as representing Jerusalem, her strength, power, and protective forces whether literal or figurative. The Lord promises to rend the wall. The term “rend” carries the idea of ripping apart, destruction, and collapse. This will come to pass by a figurative stormy wind, overflowing shower, and great hailstones. Based on our symbolic powers of destruction, what do these elements do to untempered mud brick walls? As discussed previously, mud bricks that are untempered have basically no protection from the elements. Such elements would destroy an untempered wall. The Lord says that in His fury He would consume the wall. The word "*consume*" could be translated from the Hebrew as "*destroy*". It should have been clear to the Israelites that their fate was going to be far from pleasant. Unfortunately, few listened to the words of the Lord.

**Verse 14:** “So will I break down the wall that ye have daubed with untempered mortar, and bring it down to the ground, so that the foundation thereof shall be discovered, and it shall fall, and ye shall be consumed in the midst thereof: and ye shall know that I am the LORD.”

Reiterating the fact that He will destroy Jerusalem’s wall, which the false prophets had supposedly shored up and made strong against the powers of destruction, the Lord says that he will bring it down to the ground. The phrase “*bring it down to the ground*” could be translated as “*leveling it to the ground*”. In other words, the wall was going to be utterly destroyed. In so doing, the foundation of the wall was going to be exposed. A foundation is used symbolically to represent that which something is built upon. For example, if someone says that my religion is my foundation, that would imply that the religion is that which supports and strengthens all facets of one’s life. It is the reason for one’s acts and reactions. It is the dictating force for one’s decisions. The Lord says that after He destroys Jerusalem’s wall, the foundation will be “discovered”. The term “*discover*” could be translated as “*exposed*”. Basically, the true nature of Jerusalem will be exposed. They might have claimed to have allegiance to the God of Israel, however, it will become quite evident that their foundation was actually based on things of the world.

What will the final outcome of this siege be? The Lord says quite plainly “ye shall know that I am the Lord”. The siege and destruction of Jerusalem will stand as testimony to the Lord’s might and power. Those in Jerusalem that had been misled by false prophets will clearly come to the knowledge that God really was and is.

**Verse 15:** “Thus will I accomplish my wrath upon the wall, and upon them that have daubed it with untempered mortar, and will say unto you, The wall is no more, neither they that daubed it;”

Quite simply, after the Lord destroys Jerusalem’s wall (their literal and figurative protective forces and powers), and delivers His judgements upon those that claimed to have shored up the wall (represented by daubing untempered mortar in it) the Lord will have it known to all that Israel and her mighty men are fallen.

**Verse 16:** “To wit, the prophets of Israel which prophesy concerning Jerusalem, and which see visions of peace for her, and there is no peace, saith the Lord GOD.”

The term “*to wit*” is an odd phrase that most translators don’t actually find in the Hebrew text. It is apparently added on by the translators of the King James Version of the Holy Bible. It is an English phrase meaning, “that is to say”. The use of this phrase at the beginning of this verse would indicate that the translators felt that verses eighteen and nineteen are an explanation for verse seventeen.

In previous parts of this chapter, and in previous chapters, discussion has taken place regarding the false prophets of Israel and the doctrine that they preached during and prior to Ezekiel’s time. This verse emphasizes again the fact that the false prophets taught that Jerusalem was in no danger from their Lord or the powerful neighbors that surrounded them. They taught that there was peace in Jerusalem’s future, but the Lord says clearly that there is no peace. To really understand the meaning of this verse one must turn to the records of history. History says that though Jerusalem was under the rule of Babylonia, they were generally unhappy with Babylonian law, especially the high tribute or taxation that they were forced to pay. Zedekiah secretly held an anti-Babylonia conference in Jerusalem with plans of ridding himself and Israel of Babylonian rule. Many nations were invited, among which was the crucial nation of Egypt. The conference was a direct violation of Babylonian law and was not supported by God’s prophets. Zedekiah thought that with an alliance Babylonia could be overthrown, especially if Egypt committed it’s strength. Egypt was the only nation at the time that had stood up to the Babylonian army successfully. The prophet Jeremiah had warned Zedekiah that the alliance would fail, but the warning fell upon deaf ears. Zedekiah eventually stopped his tribute to Babylonia. Anticipating Babylonia’s response, he had commitments from the Egyptians and other neighboring countries for help. The prophets of Israel taught that Zedekiah’s actions were directed of God, and that the Egyptians would help bring peace to the land. How wrong they were.

**Verse 17:** “**Likewise, thou son of man, set thy face against the daughters of thy people, which prophesy out of their own heart; and prophesy thou against them.**”

The next few verses are somewhat obscure in meaning. The Lord says to Ezekiel, again referring to him as the son of mortal man, that he should turn his face against the daughters of Israel. Turning one’s face implies turning one’s attention, thought and action towards something, in this case the daughters of Israel. The term “*daughters*” is better translated from the Hebrew as “*women*”.

Figuratively, women symbolize the bride of Christ. The church, or God’s chosen people are referred to as His bride. This symbolism is

significant because a bride and groom make very sacred and serious commitments to each other at the time of marriage which include fidelity, devotion, and solidarity. Women can also symbolize virtue, receptiveness, protection (having to do with children), passiveness, and nourishing.

It is difficult to say whether or not the Lord is speaking figuratively or literally when speaking of women in these verses. It is the author's opinion that the Lord is speaking literally with some definite symbolic undertones. If He is speaking symbolically, He is asking the prophet to prophesy against those inhabitants in Israel who have entered covenants with Him and now prophesy and speak from their own heart and not in accordance with God. If He is speaking literally, the Lord is then referring to a literal group of women who have taken it upon themselves to preach from their own heart or desire. It might be difficult to imagine women of this time taking that role; however, during this time period many false religions had arisen which had "gypsy" type women who would perform supernatural acts such as fortune telling, séances, and prophesy. This might offer an explanation for what kind of women the Lord is speaking to.



**Verse 18:** **“And say, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Woe to the women that sew pillows to all armholes, and make kerchiefs upon the head of every stature to hunt souls! Will ye hunt the souls of my people, and will ye save the souls alive that come unto you?”**

Adding to our unsurity as to whom the women or daughters spoken of in verse seventeen are, this verse speaks of some of the acts they perform which are even more puzzling. The Lord issues a warning to them. This is evident by the use of the word “woe”. The Lord warns them about the pillows they sew in armholes, and the kerchiefs they place on the head to hunt souls. Old Testament scholar, Moeshe Greenberg, says that the pillows sewn in all armholes were in effect cushions on the joints of every man. The pillows or cushion were bands or coverings about the elbows. They were used as trappings for magical arts. Even so, Greenberg still feels that the subject is at best obscure. We should understand that trappings are articles of dress or adornment, especially accessories used in association with magic and witchcraft. Pillows can also be used as a symbol representing bands or

objects wherewith souls are trapped. Using an alternate translation, pillows could be called cushions or pads. Some translators have even translated "pillows" as "fillet" as in magical bands. The word pillow in this verse was translated from the Hebrew word "kesel" or "k<sup>e</sup>satot" if used in the plural. Some feel that the Hebrew word "kesel" was derived or associated with the Assyrian word "kasu" which means to bind magically. Though it is difficult to pinpoint the exact meaning behind the word pillow, it is generally accepted that it is associated with fortune telling and false prophecy. Likewise, kerchiefs were a kind of veil used as part of the trappings for magical arts. The Hebrew word used to translate the word kerchief could also mean rag. Similar to the pillows, we know that kerchiefs were used in association with fortune telling and false prophecy, but we are unsure as to their exact nature.

Based on the Lord's word, we know the overall nature of these items. They are used, from the Lord's perspective, to hunt souls. The term "hunt souls" could alternately be translated as "entrap people". Those that practice such false religious acts literally entrap the souls of man. They lead them away to damnation. We read in the book of Kings that this was actually what happened. It is recorded, "...they rejected his statutes, and his covenant that he made with their fathers, and his testimonies which he testified against them; and they followed vanity, and became vain, and went after the heathen that were round about them, concerning whom the LORD had charged them, that they should not do like them. (2<sup>nd</sup> Kings 17:15).

**Verse 19:** "And will ye pollute me among my people for handfuls of barley and for pieces of bread, to slay the souls that should not die, and to save the souls alive that should not live, by your lying to my people that hear your lies?"

The word "pollute" might better be translated as "profane" or "misuse". This slightly changes the meaning of the verse, or at the very least further clarifies it. Here the Lord, Jesus Christ, asks a rhetorical question. To understand the Lord's question, we must first understand some of the symbols used in the verse.

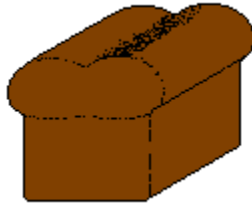
The first phrase that should be looked at is "handfuls of barley". Barley is obviously the same grain today as it was back in the ancient Near East; however, its value and importance has changed significantly. Barley was one of the most important cereal grains. It was not only a mainstay of many diets, but it was also a significant item of trade. Since it was often used in trade, it could also be considered a sign of wealth if acquired in large quantities. For periods of time barley was



even used as a unit of measure. The word barley, in this verse, is derived from the Hebrew word "se'orah" or "שעורה". It is one of the seven spices in the Near East used to symbolize the fertility of the Land.

The term "*handful*" symbolizes just that, a significant volume. It is used in the same connotation as the modern day phrase, "he's got handfuls of money".

Bread typically symbolizes life, the food of the body and the soul, and the sustainer of life. Pieces of bread are associated with the sacrament. They are also used to symbolize death, sacrifice, sharing, and union. The Hebrew word for bread is "להם" or "*lehem*" and is the term used in the bible for food in general. Actual bread, however, was a mainstay in Israelite diets. Leavened bread was called "*hametz*" while unleavened bread was called "*matzah*". In the application of this verse, bread represents the substance of life, or material wealth required to sustain life.



Another angle of the terms barley and bread in this verse ignores any symbolic definitions and suggests that the two were mere instruments in divination. Many feel that barley flour and breadcrumbs were used in an act similar to oil divination (see Appendix D - The Religion and Culture of Babylon). In this act, the diviner would fill a bowl with water. He or she would then cast flour and bread crumbs on the water. The diviner would then wait for the god or gods to act upon the flour or breadcrumbs. The diviner would interpret the reaction of the flour or breadcrumbs on the water as divine instruction. Generally, the diviner would refer to legend or a book of omen to understand the reaction in respect to the interpretation of the message from the gods. Given this relationship, the barley and bread referred to in this verse might be referring to the Israelite adoption of false religious worship and practices.



In the same light, bread and barley were often used as offerings to deity. They were associated with such religious acts in Judaic as well as heathen worship. The Israelites were commanded by God to include barley and bread in their sacrificial worship. Interestingly enough, the Book of Numbers explains that if a man were overcome with jealousy over his wife, even if justified, an offering to the God of Israel was necessary to receive forgiveness. This offering consisted, among other things, of the presentation of barley flour and bread before the priests (Numbers 5:11-15). One might remember that Israel is often referred to as the bride of Jehovah. Idol worship is also often analogized as the act of an unfaithful wife. Isn't it interesting that as the

Lord, Jehovah, denounces Israel for idol worship and false prophesy, He does so using symbols that reference the items used in relation to jealously offerings. Remember that the Lord told Israel in the Ten Commandments in reference to idol worship, "*Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me*" (Exodus 20:5).

How would all of this pollute the Lord among his people? If the barley and bread spoken of refer to idol worship and fortune telling based on witchcraft. Moeshe Greenberg said, "*Foretunetellers degrade God by invoking him in their hocus-pocus*" (Ezekiel Chapters 1-20, Moeshe Greenberg, page 240).

Given this information, this verse might be rephrased or reworded as follows.

*"And will ye profane or misuse me among my people, the Israelites, for handfuls of barley (possibly abundances of wealth) and for pieces of bread (possibly the material things of this life), or false idols, to slay the souls that should not die (to take away the spiritual salvation of those that are righteous by leading them astray), and to save the souls alive that should not live (to preserve the wicked in their wickedness by not issuing a voice of warning or by giving them false justification for their actions), by your lying to my people that hear your lies?"*

**Verse 20-21:** "Wherefore thus saith the Lord GOD: Behold, I am against your pillows, wherewith ye there hunt the souls to make them fly, and I will tear them from your arms, and will let the souls go, even the souls that ye hunt to make them fly. Your kerchiefs also will I tear, and deliver my people out of your hand, and they shall be no more in your hand to be hunted; and ye shall know that I am the LORD."

The Lord makes it very clear in this verse that He does not approve of pillows, or false religious rituals which were being performed in Israel. He says that with such ritual they "hunt the souls to make them fly". Again we are presented with a rather puzzling passage. The term "fly" is translated from the Hebrew word meaning, "free". The same word in Hebrew could also be used to mean "bird like" and is often associated with being caged or held captive. This makes this passage even more complicated since the two definitions or translations are direct opposites. Based on the contents of this chapter, it is the author's opinion that the correct translation for the word fly is

actually captive. The Lord, through Ezekiel, probably used the word fly because of the unique symbolism associated with birds and the souls of man. Birds often symbolize the soul or spirit of man. Birds can be captive (in a cage) or free (flying in the wind).

This verse makes it clear to those individuals that were entrapping the citizens of Israel with magical rituals and false prophecy that the Lord was not going to allow that. He was going to destroy Israel and free the surviving citizens from its grasps.

**Verse 22:** **“Because with lies ye have made the heart of the righteous sad, whom I have not made sad; and strengthened the hands of the wicked, that he should not return from his wicked way, by promising him life:”**

This verse points out an interesting concept that many may have a hard time grasping. The lies or false teachings of the wicked cause the righteous to be sad, or suffer. The suffering of the righteous is not the desire or work of the Lord. It is rather the result of the choices and actions of the wicked. Many misunderstand and feel that the suffering of the righteous is the work of God. This verse states that the lies and false teachings of the false prophets have caused sadness upon the righteous, which was not brought about by deity.


The verse goes on to speak of the effect that the teachings of the false prophets have on the wicked. Before, we delve into that subject, a couple of phrases in the passage should be clarified. The word "*strengthen*" could also be translated from the Hebrew as "*encourage*". The phrase "*by promising him life*" could be better translated from the Hebrew as "*to save his life*". Given these clarifications, the end of the verse is a bit easier to understand. Basically, the teachings of the false prophets encourage the actions of the wicked, and detour them from the principles and actions that would cause them to repent and save their life, or gain eternal salvation.

**Verse 23:** **“Therefore ye shall see no more vanity, nor divine divinations: for I will deliver my people out of your hand: and ye shall know that I am the LORD.”**

Appropriately, this verse ends with a promise that the days of those that profess to see visions, suppose to utter revelations and actually have seen and heard nothing are quickly coming to a close. The Lord promises to deliver His people, and that the wicked will know that He is the Lord.



**Chapter  
Summary:**



In this chapter, the prophet Ezekiel is directed from on High to prophesy and preach unto the false prophets and inhabitants of Jerusalem and warn them about the dangers and displeasure of the false prophecy among them. He tells of prophets who preach according to their own desires and not the desires of God, that the Lord God will send His wrath upon them for such acts. Ezekiel tells them that the Lord is aware of the fact that the false prophets tell the inhabitants what they want to hear, while they have received no divine revelation. The Lord instructs the prophet to give the parable of the jackals and the wall, which conveys the idea that the false prophets are destroying Israel's protection. The Lord also instructs the prophet to speak out against those that practice priestcraft among the Hebrews. He speaks of cult religious rituals involving pillows and kerchiefs, which are instrumental in leading astray the children of God. The final message of the chapter is the fact that God will not stand for this. He promises to visit Israel, and utterly destroy it and its false prophets, freeing the remainder of its inhabitants from their influence.

