

## Chapter 16

**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. In fact, in 594 BC, Zedekiah hosted an anti-Babylonian conference in Jerusalem. 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. During this time period, Nebuchadnezzar was involved in the expansion and beautification of Babylonia.

**Preview:** The prophet Ezekiel is told by the Lord to carry a message to His people. The message, he is told, will cause them to know the sins they have committed against God. To this point in the chapter, the words are clear and direct. The remaining message to Israel, however, was one of parable or figurative language. The Lord relates a story of an infant who is born to a father and mother in the land of Canaan. The parents are less than caring and neglect the infant. Despite the needs of this poor infant all of those that passed by and saw her had no pity. Fortunately, the Lord passed by and saw her. Having pity on the infant, He cared for her and saw after her. Consequently, she grew into a beautiful woman, and eventually became the Lord's wife. This union was one of sacred covenant. As the Lord's wife, her beauty grew even more. Furthermore, she was blessed with all that the Lord had, and her reputation went

out among many foreign lands. Despite such rich luxurious conditions, she broke her marriage covenants and committed all manner of whoredoms. Because of her actions the Lord promised to bring great wrath upon her. Apparently, the woman of discussion had several sisters who had also committed whoredoms. Despite their sins, her sins are considered greater than theirs because of all that she had been given by the Lord and the covenants she had entered into. The chapter ends with a promise that the Lord will eventually remember the covenants that they made together. It is interesting to note what each of the characters, acts, and symbols represent in this chapter. Understanding them is the key to understanding the Lord's message in this chapter. As a note, chapter sixteen is the longest chapter in the book of Ezekiel and like many of the other chapters it is rich in symbolism.



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

The word “*again*” is significant in that Ezekiel was frequented so often with revelation from the Lord that he could classify his revelations as “*again*”. Most men would feel awestruck to have one revelation from the Lord; however, Ezekiel received them on a relatively frequent basis. The prophet Ezekiel received a known 48 revelations over about a 20-year time period, the last being after an approximate 13-year gap. Eliminating the final revelation, Ezekiel would have averaged over 1 revelation every 2 months for seven years straight. We should keep in mind that Ezekiel probably received other revelations, which have become lost to us over time. One example of this is writings of Ezekiel found amongst the Dead Sea scrolls.

The date for this revelation is listed at the beginning of this chapter. The approximation for the time of this chapter was derived by assuming that this chapter, like most in Ezekiel's book is in chronological order with the rest of the book. The last chapter earmarked by Ezekiel with a date was chapter eleven. That date was August 11, 592 BC. The next chapter identified by the prophet with a date is chapter twenty. The date given for that chapter is July 8, 591 BC.

Sometime between these two dates would be the logical date placement of this chapter.

**Verse 2:** “**Son of man, cause Jerusalem to know her abominations.**”

Calling Ezekiel by his seemingly adopted title, the Lord says “*Son of man, cause Jerusalem to know her abominations*”. Abominations are things or actions that bring strong dislike or loathing. Based on the content of previous chapters, Israel had done many things that could be classified as abominations before the Lord. They committed idolatry, murdered by human sacrifice to false gods, they broke sacred covenants made to the Lord, they defiled the Lord’s holy temple, the list can go on and on. Not among the least of these was the rejection of His holy prophets who came as a voice of warning.

When considering the message of this verse, one should consider the use of the word ‘*Jerusalem*’. Jerusalem was often used as a symbol for Israel, and then later on for the Kingdom of Judah. It’s usage here is not limited to the city of Jerusalem alone, but included all of the people that fell under the nation that called Jerusalem their capital. It was to those people that the Lord was speaking.

The Lord has a pattern that He follows prior to any destruction, wrath, or ill fate which He dispenses upon His children. Prior to such, He always sends a voice of warning. Noah delivered this message before the great flood. Jonah, after being persuaded in the fish’s belly, warned the people of Ninevah. Samuel the Lamanite did it prior to the great destruction in the American Hemisphere. Hosea and Isaiah delivered the very same message before the Northern Kingdom of Israel was destroyed by the Assyrians. There are, in addition to these, several others that could be mentioned. Suffice it to say that the Lord does not bring destruction upon His children without first warning them and giving them opportunity to change. In our day, we are taught, “*Behold, I sent you out to testify and warn the people, and it becometh every man who hath been warned to warn his neighbor*” (*Doctrine and Covenants 88:81*). This verse makes an introduction as to the purpose of chapter sixteen.

**Verse 3:** “**And say. Thus saith the Lord GOD unto Jerusalem: Thy birth and thy nativity is of the land of Canaan; thy father was an Amorite, and thy mother an Hittite.**”

This verse starts out as more or less a dictation from the Lord to Ezekiel containing the words that Ezekiel was to utter unto Jerusalem. The Lord was very clear that it was a message from Him and it was directed at Jerusalem. It is sometimes confusing when the Lord uses the term Jerusalem since it is often used synonymously with the

kingdom associated with Jerusalem, that being Judah (previously Israel). Since Jerusalem was the capital of Judah, it was often used to represent the entire country. Such is the case in this verse. The Lord is indeed speaking to the entire Kingdom of Judah.

The start of the Lord's message is somewhat obscure. He says, of Judah, that its birth and nativity is of the land of Canaan. To better understand what the Lord is getting at a couple of terms need to be defined. Before doing so, it should be pointed out that the term "birth" might better be translated from the Hebrew as "origins". The two terms that should be defined are origins and nativity. The term "nativity" is defined by the American Heritage Dictionary as follows.

**Nativity** *n.* birth; especially the place, conditions, or circumstances of being born.

Likewise, the term "origin" is defined as follows.

**Origin** *n.* the point at which something comes into existence or from which it derives or is derived.

Right off hand, one might recall that when Abraham was led out of the land of the Chaldeans, he was led by the Lord to a Promised Land. This Promised Land that he eventually found himself in was better known as the land of Canaan. It was in Canaan that Abraham's family grew and prospered. Eventually, Abraham's grandson Jacob made a covenant with the Lord (as did his father and his father's father) and consequently had his name changed by the Lord to **'Israel'**. All of Abraham's descendants from that point on became known as *'Israel'*. Interestingly, the word *'Israel'* means "one who prevails with God". Symbolically, the Israelites have their birth and nativity in the land of Canaan. One might ask, what is significant about the land of Canaan? Why does the Lord take time to point out that Israel's origin began there?

**Canaanites** are descendants of Canaan, a grandson of Noah. Unfortunately, Canaan was born of Noah's son, Ham who was cursed by his father. The Canaanites were denied the priesthood because of the transgression of Ham. After Ham's rejection by his father, Canaan's descendants settled in what we have come to call the Holy Lands (amongst other lands) prior to Abraham's entry into that part of the world. Their name became synonymous with the word "merchant" and coincidentally they were heavily into commerce and trade. Consequently, they are sometimes used to symbolize worldliness and sin. Moeshe Greenberg wrote, speaking of Jerusalem and the Canaanites, the "*Land of the Canaanite' emphasized the pagan pedigree; biblical ethnography connects Canaanites, Amorites and Hittites very closely, and these three to the Jebusites, the pre-Israelite*

*inhabitants of the city” (Ezekiel 1-20, Moeshe Greenberg, page 274).* The Canaanites occupied the Holy Lands from the shores of the Mediterranean Sea to the Jordan River, and the entire valley between. From the Canaanites came many other tribes, such as the Hittites and Amorites, which are of especial importance when trying to understand this chapter in Ezekiel.

## The Land of Canaan



Continuing the symbolic imagery of birth and nativity, the Lord ends this verse by speaking of Israel’s mother and father. As one thinks of Israel’s parents, there are a couple of images that come quickly to mind. The first might be father Abraham and his wife Sarah. Such would be a logical choice. Even more so would be that of Jacob (Israel) and Rachael, though Jacob had children by several wives. The final choice might be that of our Heavenly Parents, the Father and Mother of all mankind. Unfortunately, the symbolism used here refers to neither. The Lord speaks of Israel’s father and mother as being the Amorites and Hittites respectively. This thought does not offer immediate and obvious explanation.

Obviously, the literal father of the Israelites was not the Amorites. Looking at patriarchal lines, the Israelites came through the lineage of Shem while the Amorites came through the lineage of Ham. If Ezekiel had said that their father was Noah, the passage would have

made sense literally. Since he didn't, we have to look at the message in a symbolic sense.

The term father represents the sun, the spirit of man, the spirit of God, and the mental/spiritual superiority. Like the usage of the word father, the term mother also has possible symbolic overtures. Mothers symbolize creation, birth, and the giving of life.

As mentioned previously, the Amorites and Hittites were both classified as Canaanites. As such they carried the same curse and symbolic overtures as the Canaanites did. More specifically; however, who were the Amorites and the Hittites?

**Amorites** are somewhat of an obscure group of people. There is some uncertainty as to the use and origin of this name. Many scholars feel that the Amorites were a fair skinned, blue-eyed race of people who inhabited the southern part of Palestine before Semitic tribes like the Israelites, Ammonites, Edomites and other tribes came into the region. From Egyptian hieroglyphics, we find confirmation of this theory. It would also appear that the city of Lachish was one of their chief cities. *"In Joshua's time, Adonisedeq, king of Jerusalem, headed an alliance of Amorite kingdoms in the south of the country [Joshua 10:1,3]. After Joshua's death (second half of the thirteenth century B.C.E.), the city was razed and the Amorite element wiped out [Judges 1:8]. The Jesubites, apparently belonging to the Hittites and their satellites, migrated from the north during the first half of the twelfth century B.C.E., after the destruction of the Hittite empire. This is the background of Ezekiel 16:3 (Jerusalem through the Ages, Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 1968, page 4)."*

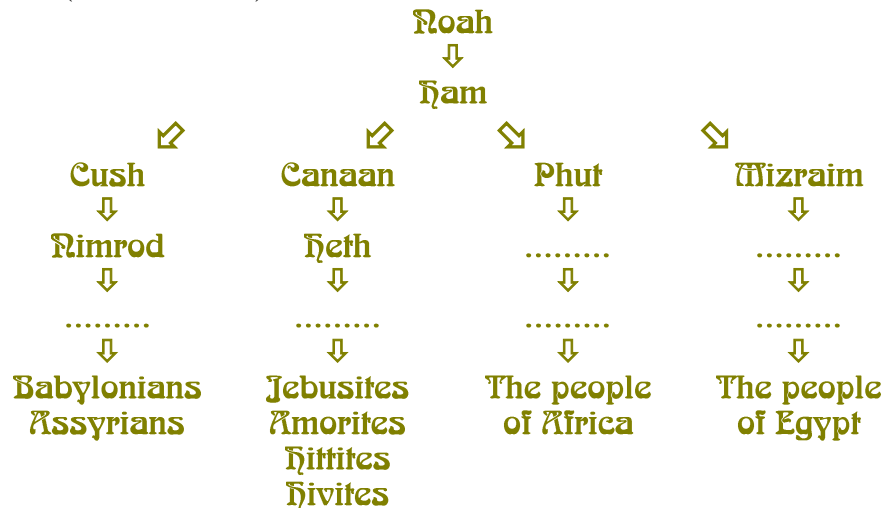
When Abraham and Lot attempted to settle down in the Promised Land, the Hittites and Amorites were already established in the land. In Genesis we read, *"And there was a strife between the herdmen of Abram's cattle and the herdmen of Lot's cattle: and the Canaanite and the Perizzite dwelled then in the land (Genesis 13:7)."* We find that *"...Abram the Hebrew...dwelt in the plain of Mamre the Amorite, brother of Eshcol, and brother of Aner: and these were confederate with Abram" (Genesis 14:13).*

Though the Amorites and the rest of the descendants of Canaan might have been confederate with Abraham in the beginning, the Lord knew and told Abraham that it would not always be that way. Speaking of the years that Israel was to be captive in Egypt and their return to the Promised Land thereafter, the Lord told Abraham, *"...Know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years; And also that nation, whom they shall serve, will I judge: and afterward shall they come out with great substance. And thou shalt go to thy fathers in peace; thou shalt be buried in a good old age. But in the fourth generation they shall come hither again: for the iniquity of the*

*Amorites is not yet full. And it came to pass, that, when the sun went down, and it was dark, behold a smoking furnace, and a burning lamp that passed between those pieces. In the same day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying, Unto thy seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates: The Kenites, and the Kenizzites, and the Kadmonites, And the **Hittites**, and the Perizzites, and the Rephaims, and the **Amorites**, and the **Canaanites**, and the Girgashites, and the Jebusites” (Genesis 15:13-21).* This passage might give use a clue as to the meaning of the Amorites and Hittites being the father and mother of the Israelites. Figuratively speaking, Israel came to be (symbolically born) in the land of the Amorites and Hittites (symbolically parents).

The iniquity and lineage of the Canaanites was such that the Lord had forbidden the children of Abraham from inter-marrying with them. As Abraham looked for a wife for his son, he instructed his servant, “*And I will make thee swear by the LORD, the God of heaven, and the God of the earth, that thou shalt not take a wife unto my son of the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I dwell” (Genesis 24:3).* As history tells, Isaac did not marry into the forbidden race. Similarly, “*...Rebekah said to Isaac, I am weary of my life because of the daughters of Heth: if Jacob take a wife of the daughters of Heth, such as these which are of the daughters of the land, what good shall my life do me?” (Genesis 27:46).* Defying this law was very serious as is evident in Rebekah’s emotions. Interestingly enough, Jacob did not take a daughter of Heth to wife. Heth would have been the son of Canaan and the father to the Amorites and Hittites. Since Jacob was later named ‘*Israel*’ it is evident that there was absolutely no way that the Amorites and Hittites could be considered literal progenitors to the Israelites.

**Hittites** were a race of people that are presently considered to be ancient people who descended from the great-grandson of Noah, Heth (Genesis 10:15).



The Hittites were a branch of the Canaanites, and in the Bible their name carried the connotation of all the Canaanite nations who lived in northern Palestine from the Orantes to the Euphrates Rivers (1<sup>st</sup> Kings 10:29, 2<sup>nd</sup> Kings 7:6). Their empire at one time extended to the Northwest of Asia Minor and they were strong enough to contend on equal terms with the Kings of Egypt and the Assyrians. They were known for their love of literature and art. In fact, they even named one of their predominate cities, "kirjath-sepher" which translates as the "city of books". Their love of art is evident in the many sculptures and curious architecture that remain only in the remnants of ruins. It should be noted that after the time of Abraham, the Hittite nation settled in what is now modern day Turkey. Most Biblical maps show the Hittite Empire in or about Asia-Minor rather than in Canaan. For the purpose of evaluating this verse in Ezekiel, we should keep in mind that the Hittites were indeed in Canaan at the time of Abraham's entry into the land and for quite a period thereafter.

In fact, Abraham's relationship with the Hittites was such that his death prompted them to give the Israelites a piece of their land to bury him and his posterity. This was a very unusual thing, giving a foreigner land. In Genesis we read, "*And Ephron dwelt among the children of Heth: and Ephron the **Hittite** answered Abraham in the audience of the children of Heth, even of all that went in at the gate of his city, saying, Nay, my lord, hear me: the field give I thee, and the cave that is therein, I give it thee; in the presence of the sons of my people give I it thee: bury thy dead*" (Genesis 23:10).

Keil and Delitsch probably summarized the message in this verse best when they wrote, "*The descent and birth referred to are not physical, but spiritual descent. Spiritually, Israel sprang from the land of the Canaanites; [though they should have sprung from their spiritual Father, Jehovah] and it's father was the Amorite and its mother a Hittite, in the same sense in which Jesus said to the Jews, 'Ye are of your father the devil' (John 8:44). The land of the Canaanites is mentioned as the land of the worst heathen abominations; and from among the Canaanitish tribes, the Amorites and the Hittites are mentioned as father and mother,... because they were recognized as the leaders in Canaanitish ungodliness*" (Keil and Delitsch, Commentary, 9:1:196). Basically, the symbol of the father and mother in this verse refers to the conditions and circumstances of Israel's coming to be or their origin.

**Verse 4:** **"And as for thy nativity, in the day thou wast born thy navel was not cut, neither wast thou washed in water to supple thee; thou wast not salted at all, nor swaddled at all."**

The Lord continues His symbolic message by speaking of Israel's nativity. As discussed in the previous verse, Israel's nativity represented the conditions and circumstances of her origin. These



circumstances are explained further by the Lord in this verse using the same line of symbolic imagery. The Lord discusses Israel's symbolic birth. Of which, He says that Israel's navel was never cut, neither was Israel washed with water. Furthermore, Israel was never salted or swaddled. Understanding these metaphors requires the examination of each individual element.

The first element that should be evaluated is that of cutting the navel. The term '*naval*', or '*navel*', might better be translated as '*umbilical cord*' when evaluating the Hebrew script. The cutting of a newborn baby's umbilical cord is not only customary, but it is a necessary step that should be taken after birth. The umbilical cord functions as the lifeline of a baby prior to birth; however, after leaving the mother it serves no useful purpose. Used figuratively, the navel cord symbolizes the center from which the world is nourished. The navel is considered the center of the world; much like the sun is considered the center of the universe. The navel cord is associated with dependence and the lifeline of man. It carries the idea of man's dependence on man rather than God. The Lord said, "*Thy naval [umbilical cord] was not cut*". That is, Israel was still being nourished in their wickedness by the degrading practices of their heathen neighbors who had given them birth in iniquity. Once the Lord placed the children of Israel in the Promised Land, He expected them to sever their umbilical cord from their wicked parents (the Canaanites) and begin to rely on Him.

The next element of the verse that should be examined is that of being washed with water. Like the cutting of the navel cord, it is and was customary to wash newborn babies with water. This first washing or bath removes all of the impurities of birth from the baby's skin. Newborns are typically covered in blood from the birthing process. In the case of this chapter, the blood represents the sins of the baby's parents. Blood symbolizes impurity, mortality, sin, wickedness, and death. The baby spoken of in this verse was obviously covered in the sins of its parents and it was not washed off with water. This does not imply that babies are born responsible for their parent's sins, but rather that the sins of the parents will greatly influence the baby's life. Symbolically as well as physically, it is necessary to wash the baby with water. Opposite of blood, water symbolizes purity. Water is also considered the symbolic counterpart of light. It represents the liquid equivalent to wisdom and knowledge. Water is also used to represent birth and life. It is associated with symbolic passages such as the fountain of life, living waters, and many of Christ's healings. It is associated with baptism and washings, symbolizing purification and repentance. Having the blood of birth washed from Israel with water represented the removal of the sins of this world. Israel was said to have **not** been washed with water. Washing symbolizes purification,

repentance, forgiveness...especially the act of being forgiven. In this verse, it is used in connection with the word '*supple*'. The American Heritage Dictionary defines '*supple*' as follows.

**Supple** *adj.* 1. Readily bent; pliant 2. Moving and bending with agility; limber 3. Yielding or changing readily; complaint or adaptable.

The word '*supple*' could have been translated from the Hebrew script as '*cleanse*' which fits in nicely with the symbolic implications of washing with water. The dictionary definition is somewhat puzzling in relation to the subject at hand.

The third evaluation item in this verse is '*being salted*'. The salting of a newborn baby might seem bizarre and almost inhuman to us; however, it was quite common among the cultures of the ancient Near East. The thought was that rubbing salt on an infant's body toughened the skin and protected the infant. Salt was considered to have certain healing properties which also might help the new born child. Salt was not rubbed on the body as coarse granules but rather dissolved into a solution of fine olive oil or similar fine oil and then rubbed on the infant. The rubbing of salt and oil on an infant also carries a symbolic meaning. Salt symbolizes purity, purification, wisdom, divine knowledge, and incorruptibility. Similarly, oil symbolizes consecration, devotion, divine wisdom, and heavenly blessings. Given these symbolic definitions it is easy to see the symbolic implication. The child was not purified or blessed with divine wisdom from her parents.

The final portion of the verse that should be evaluated is that of being '*swaddled*'. Again, a definition of terms is a good place to start. The American Heritage Dictionary defines '*swaddling*' and '*swaddling clothes*' as follows.

**Swaddle** *tr. v.* 1. To wrap or bind in bandages; swathe 2. To wrap in swaddling clothes.

**Swaddling Clothes** *pl. n.* Strips of cloth wrapped around a newborn infant to hold its legs and arms still.

In ancient societies, the act of swaddling a newborn was considered absolutely necessary to set the child's bones in the proper place. The idea was to place the child's limbs in set positions and then bind the child tightly so that the limbs would eventually set themselves in that position. This act was called swaddling. Its symbolic implication might relate to guidance and discipline provided by goodly parents while they are in their youth to assure that they remain on the proper path. The child spoken of in this verse was denied this blessing. Swaddling carries the idea of divine direction and instruction.

The poor child spoken of in this chapter was not only born to ungodly parents, but neither was she “cut from the naval cord...washed...salted...or swaddled”. She had not been cleansed from the corruption she had obtained from parents. These physical acts are obviously crucial from the symbolic sense, but they were also considered crucial in the literal sense. *“Talmudic rabbis deemed these operations on the new born so vital that they expressly permitted them even in violation of the Sabbath. In modern times Arab-midwives in Palestine were observed, after the cutting of the navel cord, dressing the infants body in a mixture of salt and oil. Salt was rubbed on for seven days after birth in the belief that it toughened the child's skin and worked beneficently on his character. The infant was swaddled immediately and kept so for forty days to six months to 'straighten out' or 'set in place' its limbs”* (Ezekiel 1-20, Moeshe Greenberg, page 274).

One final observation might be pointed out before continuing on with the chapter. Notice the parallels between the acts in this chapter and rites performed in the ancient temple ceremony. Speaking of Aaron and his sons, the Lord told Moses, “When they go into the tabernacle of the congregation, they shall **wash with water**, that they die not...and thou shalt make it **an oil of holy ointment**, an ointment compound after the art of the apothecary; it shall be **an holy anointing oil**... And thou shalt anoint Aaron and his sons, and **consecrate them**, that they may **minister unto me** in the priest's office” (Exodus 30:20-30).

Physical Act	Symbolic Meaning	Temple Rituals
Cutting the Naval Cord	← Severing man's dependence on man →	<b>Changing of Ones Clothes</b> “And thou shalt take the garments and put them on...(Exodus 29:5)”
Washed with Water	← Purification & removal of the sins of the world →	<b>Washing</b> “And Aaron and his sons thou shalt bring unto the door of the tabernacle...and shalt wash them with water (Exodus 29:4)”
Salted and Oiled	← Further purification and consecration To God →	<b>Anointing</b> “Then shalt thou take the anointing oil, and pour it upon his head and anoint him (Exodus 29:7).”
Swaddled	← Divine direction, instruction, and guidance →	<b>Performance of other Sacred Rituals</b> “And thou shalt gird them with girdles...and put bonnets on them...and cause a bullock to be brought before the tabernacle...(Exodus 29:9-10)”

**Verse 5:** “None eye pitied thee, to do any of these unto thee, to have compassion upon thee; but thou wast cast out in the open field, to the loathing of thy person, in the day that thou wast born.”

This verse starts with the symbol of the eye. The symbolic eye can represent among other things, the knowledge of God, the vision and understanding of man, and one’s self. Apparently, no one looked upon this child, who represented the Hebrews, and had pity or



compassion upon her. There was no one who saw fit to care for her needs or give unto her that which was required for her well being. One doesn’t need to look hard to see the parallelism with our own society. We often seek to fill our spiritual needs from the world we live in. The world, however, isn’t able or capable of filling these needs. In fact, ‘*the world*’ has no pity or compassion on those that seek such blessings.

The last part of this verse can be somewhat puzzling. The newborn baby in this metaphor is said to have been cast out into the open field. Again, for the purpose of understanding this verse, we must search out the meaning of the symbols used. The term ‘*field*’, when used as a symbol, typically represents the world in which we live. It is indeed the earth. The baby was cast into the cold and dreary world.

The literal application of this verse is not as far fetched as it might seem. In ancient societies of the Near East, it was common for parents to forsake unwanted children and kill them by exposure. They would simply abandon them in open fields or other such treacherous locations. Symbolically, Israel had been abandon by the nations of her origin.

Continuing the parallelism with our own society, the baby was said to have been cast into the world. As we struggle to obtain spiritual light don’t we sometimes feel that we have been abandoned in the world from our birth? Do we feel as though we are loathed of society for seeking and desiring the spiritual blessing required for exaltation? Such was the case with the Hebrews and the people of their origin. The Hebrews sought to obtain the blessings of washing, anointing, and the light and knowledge of Heaven in a world of darkness and sin.

**Verse 6:** “And when I passed by thee, and saw thee polluted in thine own blood, I said unto thee when thou wast in thy blood, Live; yea, I said unto thee when thou wast in thy blood, Live.”

Before discussing the contents of this verse, it would be prudent to understand that the ‘*I*’ spoken of in this verse represents the Savior

Himself, while the *'thee'* spoken of is the symbolic child used as a representation of Israel.

In this verse, the figurative story is continued from previous verses. The Lord passes by Israel, as the figurative baby. Taking notice of her, He sees that she is *'polluted'* in her own *'blood'*. An alternate translation for the word use to translate *'polluted'* into English could be *'wallowing'*. The two words offer up very different meanings. The word *'pollute'* carries the idea of making something unfit or harm to living things. It is usually associated with refuse, waste, and garbage. *'Wallowing'*, on the other hand, carries the idea of abundance and excess. The term *'blood'* when used in a figurative sense becomes a complex symbol. It can carry a litany of symbolic interpretations. Some of the most common symbolic meanings for *'blood'* are life principles, the soul, strength, the sins of man, mortality, and the great fall.

The meaning behind this verse is not clear. In fact, the interpretation thereof, based on the definition of the symbols, is subject to much conjecture. One might suppose that the Lord is speaking of the fact that the Hebrews had adopted many of the wicked habits of their neighbors. They had polluted themselves with the sins of the world.

Another interpretation that is given in several Bible commentaries on this verse is that the blood spoken of here is referring to a woman's menstrual cycle. This might seem really odd; however, it has enough merit for discussion. The menstrual cycle of a woman symbolizes the fall of man referencing the fact that Eve was promised that God would *"greatly multiply"* her *"sorrow and thy conception"* in bringing *"forth children"* (Genesis 3:16). Thus it would represent a stage of life, symbolizing a point in a woman's life when she has reached womanhood. Based on the first part of the next verse it could symbolize the time in which a woman might *"multiply"* or bring forth children and posterity. With this it might carry the connotation of accountability and responsibility.

One point of confusion in this verse is the fact that Lord speaks of *"thy"* blood or *"thine own"* blood. This verse would have been explained easier if the Lord had said that Israel was polluted in *'their'* blood instead of *'thy'* blood. This would have then lead us to believe that the Lord was speaking of the sins of Israel's neighbors. Unfortunately, Israel was covered in her own blood. When she was in this state the Lord gave her an invitation. This was an invitation to live. Such an invitation might be an invitation to repent, or to bring forth children. The unfortunate truth is that the meaning behind this verse is still obscure to us. It's meaning lies in personal prayer and revelation from on High.

**Verse 7:** “I have caused thee to multiply as the bud of the field, and thou hast increased and waxen great, and thou art come to excellent ornaments: thy breasts are fashioned, and thine hair is grown, whereas thou wast naked and bare.”

Before continuing with the commentary of this verse, several terms should be discussed. The Lord says that He had *‘multiplied’* the child spoken of throughout



the child spoken of throughout this chapter (used to represent Israel) as a *‘bud in the field’*. The term *‘bud’* is usually used to represent people. In the previous verses it was mentioned that the term *‘field’* represents the earth. Hence, *‘the buds of the field’* are the symbolic equivalents of *‘the people of the earth’*. The term *‘multiply’* could have been translated as *‘flourish’*. It carries the connotation of being blessed. Hence, the Lord blessed Israel above the people of the world.

Continuing, the Lord states that Israel had *‘increased’* and *‘waxed great’*. The term *‘increased’* could have been translated as *‘grown’*, and the term *‘waxen great’* could have been translated as *‘matured’*. An alternate translation for *‘waxen great’* from the Hebrew could be *‘grown large’*. As an example of this, the Lord says that the woman had developed excellent ornaments. Ornaments are usually associated with the things we hang on our Christmas trees; however, this application of the word is somewhat different in the context of this verse. Like the ornaments on a Christmas tree, the ornaments spoken of in this verse are things that decorate, adorn, and add beauty to something. In the case of this verse, the ornaments are physical adornments that are blessings from heaven, i.e. beautiful hair, attractive physical features, and pleasant expressions. In fact, the Lord used two of these features as symbolic examples of Israel’s blessings. The Lord speaks of Israel’s breasts being fashioned and her hair being grown. Breasts can symbolize motherhood, nourishment, protection, and love. The bared breast represents humility, grief, repentance, and penitence. In society, breasts are a sign of womanhood and often associated with beauty. The term *‘fashioned’* could mean *‘developed’* or *‘made into’*. It might also mean to *‘cover’* or *‘clothe’*. Based on the latter part of this verse, we might assume that the Lord is referring to her breasts being clothed. This is also considered a sign of wealth since cloths were often expensive. The second symbol was that of the hair. Torn or cut hair represents grief and mourning. Hair by itself represents strength, energy, and thought. The loss of ones hair could also represent the loss

of those great blessings. The fact that one's hair is grown is an indication of blessings. Like the breasts, grown hair is also a symbol of beauty among society. Among society it is also sign of womanhood.

The term 'whereas' could be equivalent to "but"; however, it probably carries the idea of being on the contrary or due to the fact of being in a contradictory state. Basically, the Lord is saying I have given you all of these blessings; 'whereas', you were in a contradictory state. The child was apparently naked and bare when found, and the Lord clothed her, grew her hair, and blessed her.

The whole subject of being naked and bare is covered in greater detail in the next verse.

**Verse 8:** **“Now when I passed by thee, and looked upon thee, behold, thy time was the time of love; and I spread my skirt over thee, and covered thy nakedness: yea, I swore unto thee, and entered into a covenant with thee, saith the Lord GOD, and thou becamest mine.”**

The time of love could indicate that she had reached the age of lovemaking or adulthood. By our terms, we might say that she was of marrying age. The term refers to a time when a woman is capable of making love. It should be noted that verse six might have been making reference to the woman's menstrual cycle. In ancient cultures a woman's first cycle often qualified her for marriage.

The words 'naked' and 'nakedness' are used throughout the Bible as significant teaching symbols. The term "nakedness" is used biblically to represent being unashamed; depicting the body and one's self-standing clothed in its own power. Nakedness can also symbolize shame and poverty. It is also said to represent pagan or satanic shamelessness. It might be recalled that when Adam and Eve were in the Garden of Eden "...they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed" (Moses 3:25). They had no shame because they were innocent and had no reason for shame. In this sense, nudity represents the natural, innocent and paradisiacal state. It is also associated with birth, creation, the stripping away of worldly wealth and ambition. Truly, Adam and Eve exhibited these traits prior to the fall. It is due to the pre and post fall conditions that allow "nakedness" to be a symbol of both shame and shamelessness.

After the fall, "...the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons. And they heard the voice of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day: and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God amongst the trees of the garden. And the LORD God called unto Adam, and said unto him, Where art thou? And he said, I heard thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself. And he said, Who told

thee that thou wast naked? Hast thou eaten of the tree, whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldest not eat? And the man said, The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat" (Genesis 3:7-12). Once sin entered into the hearts of man, shame entered also. It caused man to be ashamed with his 'nakedness', if you will. For this purpose, nakedness has come to be a symbol of sin and wickedness.

Garments have long since been associated with nakedness. God commanded that garments of skin be made for Adam and Eve to cover their nakedness. This was a symbol of repentance and forgiveness. The covering of one with cloth represents the giving of forgiveness, while the removal of one's clothes represents the revealing of one's sins.

*"And the garments of skin which God made for Adam and his wife, when they went out of the garden, were given to Cush. For after the death of Adam and his wife, the garments were given to Enoch, the son of Jared, and when Enoch was taken up to God he gave them to Methuselah, Noah took them and brought them to the ark, and they were with him until he went out of the ark. And in their going out, Ham stole those garments from Noah his father, and he took them and hid them from his brother (The Book of Jasher 7:24-27)." Like modern*



day man, the men of the past wanted forgiveness and the blessings of God associated therewith, unfortunately, like us, they often searched after the easy way of obtaining these blessings rather than the way the



Lord has outlined. Ham stole the garment rather than earning the right to wear it. *“And Noah began to be an husbandman, and he planted a vineyard: And he drank of the wine, and was drunken; and he was uncovered within his tent. And Ham, the father of Canaan, saw the nakedness of his father, and told his two brethren without. And Shem and Japheth took a garment, and laid it upon both their shoulders, and went backward, and covered the nakedness of their father; and their faces were backward, and they saw not their father's nakedness. And Noah awoke from his wine, and knew what his younger son had done unto him. And he said, Cursed be Canaan; a servant of servants shall he be unto his brethren. And he said, Blessed be the LORD God of Shem; and Canaan shall be his servant. God shall enlarge Japheth, and he shall dwell in the tents of Shem; and Canaan shall be his servant (Genesis 9:20-27).”* Ham’s punishment was harsh. We must be aware that ours will similar if we refuse to obtain God’s blessings in the way that He has prescribed. The story given in the apocryphal Book of Jasher still leaves much unanswered and some questions as to its validity; however, the term nakedness can be further clarified by looking at this set of passages. The garments covering Noah’s nakedness represented the forgiveness and blessings that God had given him. Taking his father’s clothes exposed his father’s nakedness. In so doing, he brought condemnation on his soul and his son Canaan to whom he subsequently gave the garment.

This verse, in Ezekiel, offers what appears, according to our traditions, an odd occurrence. The Lord says that he covered her with His skirt to cover her nakedness. This act can be readily explained. *“In early Arabia, throwing a garment over a women symbolized acquiring her (Ezekiel 1-20, Moeshe Greenberg, page 277).”* One might recall the love story of Ruth and Boaz in the Old Testament. Ruth asked Boaz, *“Spread therefore thy skirt over thy hand maiden”*. She was asking for more than being just a cared for servant. She was asking to be *“nourished, loved, protected, and charished”*. Her plea was to be given the role of wife, and she posed this question using the symbol of the spreading of the skirt. It is this that is being symbolized in this verse. The Lord was taking Israel to wife in a symbolic sense, though many of the parallels to marriage are quite literal. These will be discussed as the chapter progresses.

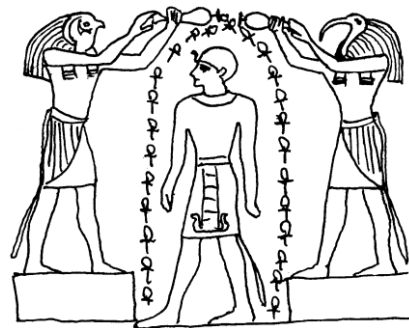
After covering Israel’s nakedness, the Lord said that He did *“sware”* unto her and entered into a covenant with her. The covenant that is being referred to is the figurative marriage covenant. This covenant is one of the first covenants issued to mortal man. It was Adam and Eve that were taught that *“a man will leave father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh”* (Genesis 2:24). Becoming one flesh carries the idea of close bonding, as well as oneness in purpose, idea, thought, and deed. True marriage

before God takes a couple from two, to one. The covenant to be such is the basic framework of marriage before the Lord. The absence of this covenant defies marriage as outlined by God. Israel was the Lord's wife in the sense that they had covenanted with Him to love him, become one with Him in purpose, idea, thought, and deed. In doing such, they became the Lord's like a husband becomes his wife's, and the wife becomes her husband's. Interestingly, in the covenant that God made with Abraham He said, "I will establish a covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant, **to be a God unto thee...and I will be their God**" (Genesis 17:7-8). Basically, the House of Israel was marrying themselves to their God. Committing fidelity and devotion to His wishes.

**Verse 9:** "Then washed I thee with water; yea, I thoroughly washed away thy blood from thee, and I anointed thee with oil."

The previous verse discussed the symbolic marriage between Israel and Jehovah. This verse continues from that point starting with the word 'then'. As either a subsequent action to their marriage or part of the actual process, the Lord washed His symbolic bride with water. It appears that the act of washing has some association with the covenants made between the Lord and His children. It is definitely associated with our figurative woman's marriage to the Lord.

The ancient Egyptians were descendants of Noah through the lineage of Ham. "The first government of Egypt was established by Pharaoh, the eldest son of Egyptus, the daughter of Ham, and it was after the manner of the government of Ham, which was patriarchal (Abraham 1:25)." This order of government was a righteous order, which had been set forth from God Himself. The problem with Egypt was that they lacked the authority and power of God's priesthood necessary to maintain such an order. As



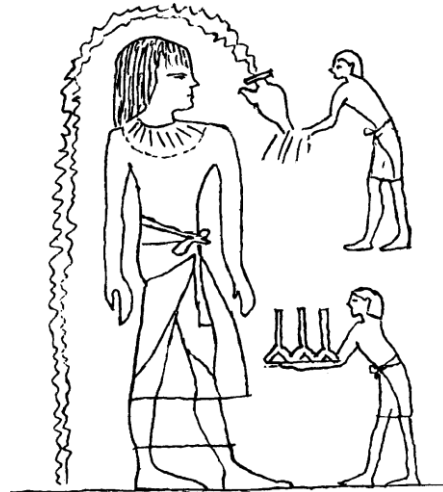
history shows, the Egyptians soon fell into idolatry and wickedness without such authority and power. Even so, there are many remnants of God's order that can be observed among the remains of the Egyptian ruins. Among such are many examples of the ordinance of washing. One of which shows the Egyptian gods "...Horus and Thoth pour"ing "water (life-symbols) over a Pharaoh, each declares him to be 'very pure,' 'thou art pure = I am pure!' " [After Lanzzone, Diz. V, Pl. 406 (The Message of




Onki

the Joseph Smith Papyri, Hugh Nibley, page 96)]. It is interesting that the water being used to wash Pharaoh in the previous picture is symbolized by the Egyptian symbol for eternal life. The 'onki' is the Egyptian sign for eternal life. The connection is beautiful. The washing of ones sins brings perfection or purity. The results of such qualify the recipient for eternal life. Without the figurative washing, one would lack the purity to earn eternal life.

Among the Egyptian motifs showing the ordinance of washing, many are incorporated with the act of being clothed. The relationship between washing and clothing might seem somewhat obscure at first; however, the connection is one of great simplicity. Imagine coming in from an entire day of working in the yard. Covered in dirt and

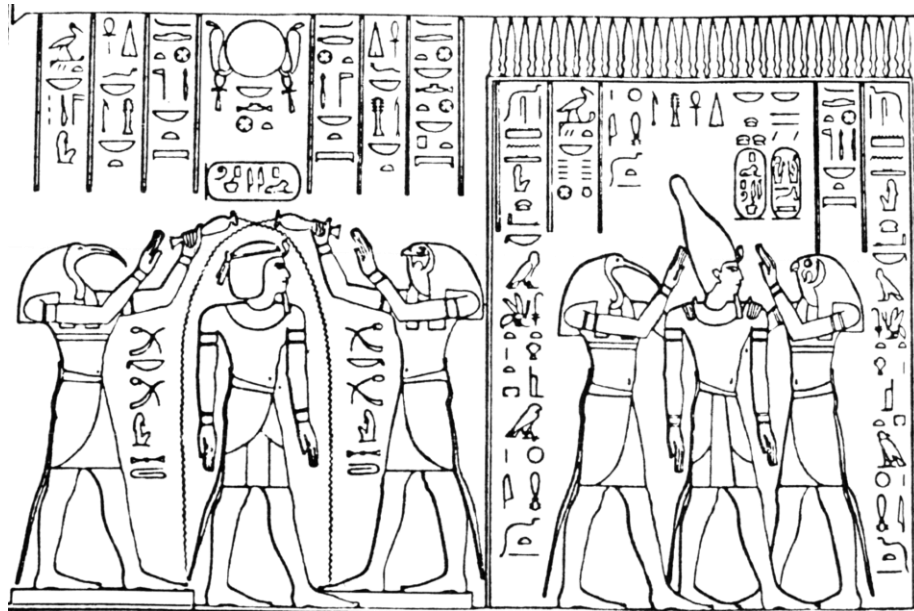


sweat, you quickly remove your soiled clothes and start a nice hot shower. Nothing feels better than a soothing shower that washes away the dirt of your labors. After adequately washing yourself, probably the last thought would be to place the same dirty clothes back on your clean body. This is the same message contained in the symbolism behind being clothed after the ordinance of washing. After having the sins of the world washed from you, robes of righteousness and purity were to be worn, not the soiled clothes of the world. In the ancient Egyptian wall motif pictured above, one can see “a subject being washed and clothed. From a sense of modesty, the Egyptians rarely depicted completely unclothed humans” (The Message of the Joseph Smith Papyri, Hugh Nibley, page 97).

**Egyptian**  
  
**symbol for**  
**clothing.**

The last part of this verse speaks of yet another ordinance that seems to go hand in hand with washing and clothing. That ordinance is the ordinance of anointing. The apocryphal Book of Eden records, “And the Lord said to Michael: ‘Go and take Enoch from out his earthly garments, and anoint him with my sweet ointment, and put him into the garments of My glory” (The Forgotten Books of Eden, Secrets of Enoch 22:8). Symbolically, the word anointing carries the idea of consecration, devotion to or commitment. It implies heavenly prosperity and joy pronounced upon the person being anointed. It is also associated with the Holy Ghost and other divine blessings.

Though the Egyptians had lost the power and authority to perform the ordinance of anointing, they had a fragmented remnant of that sacred ordinance that they practiced and considered sacred. A portion of a scene “from the temple at Karnak which shows how the royal initiation culminated in ritual embraces. In each scene the words of instruction are written over the heads of the speakers. First comes the washing...then in another room the bestowal of crown and throne...” (The Message of the Joseph Smith Papyri, Hugh Nibley, page 248).



As one can see from the scene placed in the Egyptian temple, the recipient of an anointing is first washed. He is then apparently reclotted, and finally anointed with oil. The culmination of which is being symbolically crowned with eternal life.

Oil in ancient Israel was primarily made from pressed olives. It was considered one of the three necessities of life together with food and clothing. Costly perfumed oil symbolizes wealth. In addition, oil is considered one of the blessings God



**Bowls of fresh olives**

promises as a reward for faithfulness. Furthermore, oil symbolizes honor, joy and favor. Oil, in the religious sense, typically represents consecration, dedication, and the bestowal of God's grace and wisdom.

The act of anointing is the application of oil or ointment to the head or on the person. In the ancient Near East, anointing was done for both secular and religious reasons. Due to the climatic conditions of the area, the skin required constant care or it would become chapped and cracked. It was customary for people to apply oils and ointments to the head and body for protective reasons. This basic act carries many symbolic implications. Other reasons for anointing with oil, which are often associated with washing, are listed as follows.

## The Reasons for Anointing

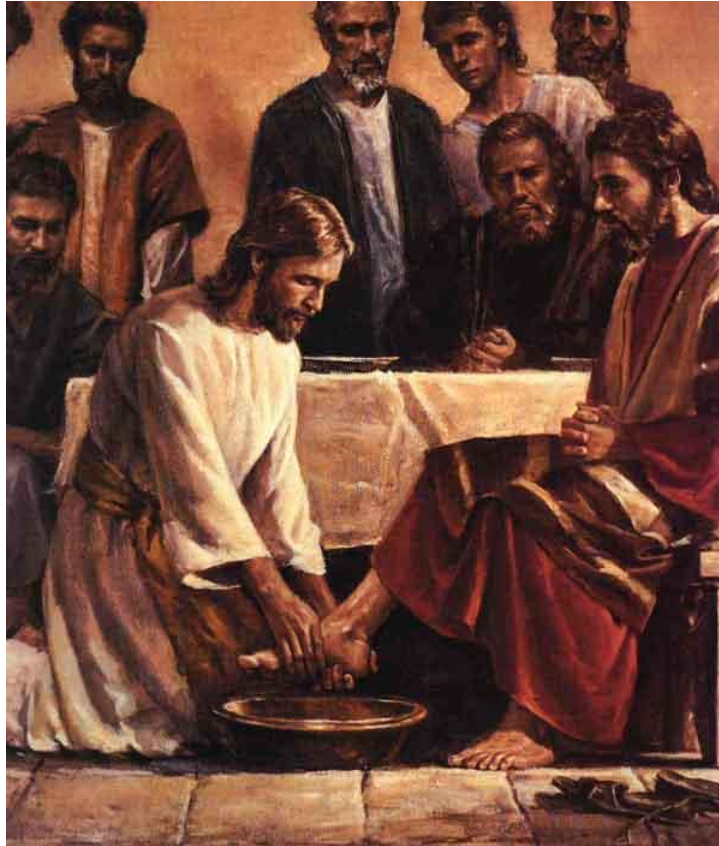
1. Anointing a visitor was done as a sign of hospitality. In



**Branches of the Olive tree  
with Several Olives Visible**

the Book of Luke, we read of the Savior visiting the home of a member of the Pharisees. As they ate, a woman, who was known to have partaken of unnamed sins, came and washed and anointed the Saviors feet. She washed His feet with her tears and dried them with her hair. After which she anointed His feet with ointment. The Pharisees condemned Christ for allowing this act saying that if He were a true prophet He would have known the nature of this lady and would have forbidden her. The Savior responded, *“My head with oil thou didst not anoint: but this woman hath anointed my feet with ointment. Wherefore I say unto thee, Her sins, which are many, are forgiven...(Luke 7:46-47).”* Apparently, the prideful Pharisees didn't respect the Savior enough to even offer the simple act of anointing at His visit. Unlike the Pharisees, the Savior Himself saw to it that the Apostles learned the valuable teachings

associated with washings and anointings. One example is when He personally washed their feet. Before He retired to the Garden of Gethsemene, He washed the feet of the Apostles. We read, “...he poureth water into a bason, and began to wash the disciples’ feet...” (John 13:5).



2. Anointing was also an act of personal grooming in the ancient world. Before King David worshipped in the Lord’s House, he groomed himself accordingly. We read, “*Then David arose from the earth, and washed, and anointed himself, and changed his apparel, and came into the house of the Lord and worshipped...*” (2<sup>nd</sup> Samuel 12:20).
3. Anointing was also performed anciently for medical reasons. In the renown parable of the Good Samaritan it might be recalled the Samaritan bound up the wounded man’s wounds and poured oil in them (Luke 10:34). Likewise, the prophet Isaiah wrote symbolically of Israel’s wounds not being bound up or softened with ointment (Isaiah 6:1).

4. Anointing is also commonly associated with the act of Healing through spiritual means. After Jesus sent out the twelve apostle to proclaim the Gospel, Mark wrote, *“And they...anointed with oil many that were sick, and healed them” (Mark 6:13).*
5. Anciently, kings were anointed as a sign of their authority having been granted by deity. Generally this was done by a religious leader, prophet, or priest having or proclaiming to have authority from God. It might be recalled that the prophet Samuel anointed Saul to be



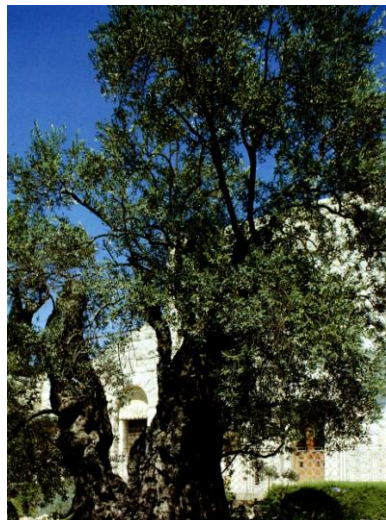
#### A Cluster of Olives

- King of Israel as instructed by the Lord. It is recorded, *“Then Samuel took a vial of oil, and poured it upon his head, and kissed him, and said, Is it not because the Lord hath anointed thee to be captain over his inheritance?” (1<sup>st</sup> Samuel 10:1).*
6. Similar to kings, it was also common for priests and prophets to be anointed for their calling. This act also symbolized the transference of priesthood powers, or the power to act in God’s name. In Exodus we read, *“And thou shalt anoint them, as thou didst anoint their father, that they minister unto me in the priest’s office: for their anointing shall surely be an everlasting priesthood throughout their generations” (Exodus 40:15).* It was important that this anointing be transferred from one having authority. Before the prophet Elijah left this earth, he was told to find a man named Elisha and anoint him to be *“prophet in thy room” (1<sup>st</sup> Kings 19:16).*
  7. The act of washing and anointing was an important and necessary part of the ancient temple ceremony. The Lord commanded the children of Israel, *“When they go into the tabernacle of the congregation, they shall wash with water, that they die not....and thou shalt make it an oil of holy ointment, an ointment compound after the art of the apothecary; it shall be an holy anointing oil... And thou shalt anoint Aaron and his sons, and consecrate them, that they may minister unto me in the priest’s office” (Exodus 30:20-30).*

- Probably the greatest association we have with the act of anointing has to do with the great atonement. As one might recall, the Savior of the world retired one evening to a small hill outside of Jerusalem called the Mount of Olives. On this hill was a small olive grove, or garden. This garden was fittingly called the Garden of Gethsemane. The word Gethsemane, if translated directly, means *'olive press'*. Olives were customarily pressed (under extreme pressure) in the process of extracting oil. Consequently, the Savior of the world was placed under extreme pressure by the weight of the sins of the world. In the process, He bled from every pore. The symbolism begins to take shape. The olive oil can easily symbolize the atoning blood pressed by the Savior on our behalf. It is this oil that allows us to repent of our sins.



**Olive trees from various locations  
in the Near East**





To conclude verse nine of this chapter, a summary is probably necessary at this point. As part of what appears to be a marriage ceremony between the Lord and a woman (used to symbolize Israel), the woman is washed with water, and anointed with oil. As discussed previously, the act of washing and anointing is often associated with being clothed. Coincidentally, the next verse discusses the woman being clothed. Symbolically, the act of washing and being anointed can carry many different meanings; however, the most probable meanings have to do with purification, consecration, devotion, being crowned as royalty, and the blessings and results of the great atonement of Jesus Christ.

Looking at the figurative story, *“The woman is now given all the care she lacked when she was born, and much more. The first three items – washing, anointing and covering – parallel the deprivations on verse four’s end [‘rubbing with salt involves oil’]”* (Ezekiel 1-20, Moeshe Greenberg, page 279). The woman lacked these things just as mortal men lack the power to obtain forgiveness, the power to change their hearts, and the power to obtain exaltation. Like the woman who could only obtain these things from the Lord, we too can only obtain these blessings through the God of Heaven.

**Verse 10:** **“I clothed thee also with broidered work, and shod thee with badgers’ skin, and I girded thee about with fine linen, and I covered thee with silk.”**

As discussed in the commentary for the previous verse, the Lord not only washed and anointed the woman, but He also clothed her. The Hebrew word for clothing is **בגדים**. *“As an expression goes, clothes make the man – and woman. A person’s clothing symbolizes vocation and material circumstances, and in many traditional societies, religious affiliation, nationality, ritual status, age, and marital status as well. According to the Torah, the first human garments consisted of fig leaves donned by Adam and Eve when they realized they were naked. The midrash claims that the first couple originally wore garments of light, but God removed these garments when they sinned, replacing them with the skin of the serpent or of leviathan...In the mystical tradition, garments are symbolic of God’s hiddenness in the world. The Torah is said to be clothed in many outer garments and must be undressed to lay bare its secrets...(The Encyclopedia of Jewish Symbols, Ellen Frankel and Betsy Platkin Teutsch, page 34-35).”*

At first one might question the fact that clothing is somehow associated with deity; however, when Adam and Eve were first cast out of the Garden of Eden one of the first blessings given to them of God was indeed clothes. The Book of Moses records, *“Unto Adam, and*

also unto his wife, did I, the Lord God, make coats of skins, and clothed them” (Moses 4:27). (Genesis 3:21 is very similar.) Adam and Eve’s nakedness represented their sins and impurity. It should be noted that Adam and Eve tried to clothe themselves with fig leaves to hide their nakedness. This symbolized them attempting to hide their sins. Unfortunately, Adam and Eve were unsuccessful in hiding their sins from the Lord. He discovered them and cast them from their paradise. Fortunate for us, the story does not end there. The Lord taught Adam and Eve how they might repent of their sins and have them washed clean. Adam was taught the order of sacrifice and an angel of the Lord explained that it represented the great and final atonement. In relation to this verse, the significant part of the story lies in the fact that God gave Adam and Eve clothes. Adam and Eve couldn’t cover their sins; however, God could. Clothes, when given of God, represent the removal or covering of one’s sins.

The clothes that the Lord clothed the woman in were not just any clothes, but she was clothed in a “*broidered work*”. The term or phrase “*broidered work*” occurs only 8 times in the standard works. Unfortunately, seven of the eight times are contained in the book of Ezekiel and are used in much the same verbiage. The passages in Ezekiel do not offer significant help in understanding this phrase. The only other passage in the Standard Works that mentions a “*broidered work*” is included in the book of Exodus, “*And thou shalt make holy garments for Aaron thy brother for glory and for beauty. And thou shalt speak unto all that are wise hearted, whom I have filled with the spirit of wisdom, that they may make Aaron's garments to consecrate him, that he may minister unto me in the priest's office. And these are the garments which they shall make; a breastplate, and an ephod, and a robe, and a broidered coat, a mitre, and a girdle: and they shall make holy garments for Aaron thy brother, and his sons, that he may minister unto me in the priest's office. And they shall take gold, and blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine linen. And they shall make the ephod of gold, of blue, and of purple, of scarlet, and fine twined linen, with cunning work*” (Exodus 28:2-6). Biblically, broidery was used in relation to princesses (Psalms 45:14), Nobleman (Judges 5:30), and the Tabernacle of God (Exodus 26:36). Those that served in the House of the Lord were required to wear clothes of broidered work.

The next portion of the verse speaks of the woman being shod. This word is somewhat uncommon when used in modern speech in reference to people. The Random House Dictionary defines the word “*shod*” as follows.

**Shod or Shoed** *n.* having an outer covering, usually of leather, for the human foot. *Having shoes.*

The Lord is said to have not only clothed the woman but He also shod her. Oddly enough, the woman was specifically shod with *'badger skin'*. Alternate translations for *'badgers' skin'* could be leather, fine leather, dugong hides, or porpoise skins. The word *'badger'* comes from the Hebrew word *'tachash'*. Most scholars agree that it denotes a color rather than an animal. The color is thought to be either black or sky-blue. Most feel that the color is indeed sky-blue, which represents heaven, purity, and the residence of God. It should also be noted that badgers were foreign to the Bible lands. Frankly, there was no such animal as a badger. Adding to the complexity of the issue, we can add the symbolic uses for the word *'skin'*. Skin symbolizes matter. The skin of a sacrificial animal represents the fat of the animal. The fat of the animal represents the life sustaining force of the animal. To wear the skin is to take upon oneself the animal's power. Consequently, it represents rebirth. Since shoes are placed on the feet, they share the symbolic meaning of the feet. Feet represent the foundation upon which something is built or sustained. If one were to assume that the symbolic meanings presented herein are correct, it might be summarized that the woman was sustained and supported by the rebirth that can only be obtained by the power of heaven.



The final part of the verse speaks of being *'girded'* with fine linen and covered with silk. To be girded is essentially to be wrapped or encircled with something like a belt or band. An alternate translation for *"girded"* could be *"turbaned"*. To be turbaned is to have ones head wrapped in long cloths, typically of high quality material. In all honesty, the application of the word in this case could be either *'girded'* or *'turbaned'*. They both have conceivable symbolic application. The act of being *'girded'* typically symbolizes the acceptance and commitment to performing a work or following a cause. The fact that the woman was girded with fine linen is significant. Fine linen is typically known as the clothing of the bride of Christ. Additional symbolic significance of fine linen is discussed in the commentary for verse thirteen of this chapter.

The act of being *'turbaned'* carries the same meaning as being crowned. A turban represents the sun, glory and royalty. A turban also symbolizes the removal or grief and mourning. In ancient Israel, if one would have cause to mourn he would shave his head and bare it in public. The wearing of a turban symbolized the covering or absence of

grief and mourning. A turban, though typically white among the Hebrews, represented the diadem; the symbol for spiritual authority and power. In fact, the Israelite linen robe and girded sash before entering the temple probably represented ultimate source of grief and Priests wore white mitres, Ezekiel chapter twenty-



High Priests wore a white themselves with a white Temple. In this case, the the absence of sin, the pain. In addition, the High a type of turban. In four we read that

Ezekiel himself wore a tire, which in Hebrew means headdress or turban (Ezekiel 24:17,23). Aside from all of the symbolic uses for the turban, it was also a very common article of clothing among Ezekiel's culture.

Continuing on, the woman, we are told, was covered by the Lord with silk. This is a rather odd comment since silk was unknown



amongst the people of the Holy Lands in the sixth century BC. Most suspect that the word "silk" is actually a mistranslation or misinterpretation used in place of the words "veil" or "shawl". Most veils of the time were constructed from soft eloquent material. Consequently, in later years the word silk often became associated with veils. Veils were used by woman of the time to cover their faces. This symbolized the fact that the woman was reserved for one person, and access to her person was limited to others. It represented a sign of chastity, keeping that which is sacred concealed from the general masses. Because of the symbolism associated with the veil, it has been

used in conjunction with female wedding attire. In addition, many lands require that women wear veils and shawls in public for the same reason.

Before leaving the commentary on this verse, one question must be asked, 'What is the overall significance of the clothing spoken of in this verse?' Biblical scholar, Moeshe Greenberg stated, "Most moderns take this finery to be the bridle outfit, but since the wedding has already occurred (verse eight), it is more likely to be the clothing with which the royal husband dowrs his wife for life" (Ezekiel 1-20, Moeshe Greenberg, page 279). Greenberg discounts the fact that the clothing represents the bridle outfit for the fact that the woman spoken of in this chapter was supposedly wed in verse eight, and washed and anointed thereafter. Most fail to recognize that the washing, anointing, and clothing of the bride was an important part of the wedding ceremony. It was in a sense part of the marriage covenant. Interestingly, ancient anointing was most often associated with royalty.

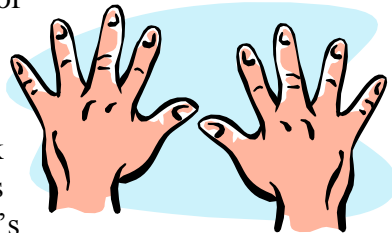
Marrying the Lord made the woman a joint heir with the Lord. She was indeed royalty, and was required to then be anointed such. Another interesting point of trivia is that brides and grooms in ancient Israel were figuratively Queens and Kings for a week after their marriage. This tradition probably originated from the same marriage rituals, and the same symbolic interpretations.

Though the interpretation of this verse and the surrounding verses is open to debate, it is highly probable that the Lord is discussing the celestial marriage between Himself and Israel, in addition to the covenants and ordinances associated therewith.

**Verse 11-12:** “I decked thee also with ornaments, and I put bracelets upon thy hands, and a chain on thy neck. And I put a jewel on thy forehead, and earrings in thine ears, and a beautiful crown upon thine head.”

This verse is a continuation of the clothing of the Lord’s bride. Verse eleven discusses the fact the Lord decked (adorn or cloth with fine attire, decorate) the woman with ‘ornaments’. ‘Ornaments’ are typically personal decorations that one would wear on one’s body. We would probably refer to them as jewelry. They would include such items as nose rings, earrings, bracelets, rings, anklets, and necklaces.

Before continuing on, the following terms could be translated differently; ‘hands’ could be ‘arms’, ‘chain’ could be ‘necklace’, and ‘neck’ could be ‘throat’. In either case, the meaning of the verse doesn’t change much. Basically, the Lord took His bride and put fine bracelets on her wrists, and a necklace around her neck. These pieces of fine jewelry represent the blessings of the Lord. Since the hands represent man’s ability to act and create, the Lord symbolically blessed those efforts. The neck represents the link between man’s intelligence and his physical ability. It represents man’s desires and dignity. Like the jewelry placed on the wrists, the jewelry on the neck represents the Lord blessing the woman’s desires and dignity.



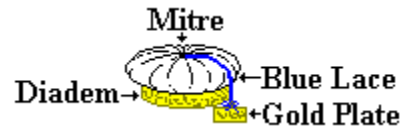
The Lord continues his symbolic story by saying that He also placed a jewel in the woman’s forehead, earrings in her ears, and a crown on her head. The phrase “jewel on thy forehead” could be translated as “ring in thy nose”. This drastic change in words comes from the fact that the term “forehead” was mistranslated and should have been “nose”. This is commonly agreed among Biblical reference books. Smith’s Bible Dictionary says, “The ‘jewels for the forehead’, mentioned by Ezekiel 16:12, and in the margin of the Authorized

Version, Genesis 24:22, were in all probability noserings” (Isaiah 3:21) (Smith’s Bible Dictionary, page 197). The nose is used symbolically to represent the whole face, which symbolizes one’s individuality and self. Interestingly enough, the forehead has very similar symbolic meaning. Ornamenting the nose could represent the beautification of ones self, both outward and inward.

The ears of the symbolic woman were also decked. The ears of a man represent his ability to hear the voice of God. Those that refuse to hear the voice of God are said to have ears, but hear not. Ears are used to represent man’s ability to hear and understand that which is spiritual. The adorning of the woman’s ear with earrings symbolizes the fact that the woman is being blessed from on High with spiritual blessings and direction.

The crowning of the head is highly significant. The head represents the center of man’s intelligence. It is the substance of man. Therein lies his potential and intelligence. The placing of a crown on the head typically represents the bestowal of royal powers and status. Israel, symbolized by the woman in this story, was crowned by the Lord. Being crowned by the Lord would indicate that all that He has is being given to the recipient. It represents exaltation and all the blessings associated therewith. In ancient Israel, those entering in the temple were blessed by the Lord to wear the Holy Mitre and Diadem.

The mitre was a turban of sorts made of fine linen. Around its base was a golden band that adorned the head of the wearer. From the mitre hung a golden

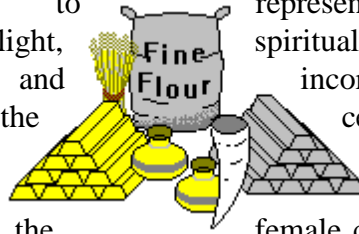


plaque with the insignia, *‘Holiness to the Lord’*. This was the crown of the Lord. It was the crown of eternal life and exaltation.

One final observation before going on, notice that each of the adornments given to the woman was circular in nature. Bracelets are round, the necklace must be circular to encompass the neck, and the nose ring is circular as well as the earrings. The crown spoken of is round so as to encompass the crown of the head. The symbolism behind this shape is eternal. Since a circle has no beginning and no end, it represents eternal blessings originating from the God of Heaven. It is a fitting symbol for God since He has no beginning and no end. In like manner, the blessings bestowed on the woman, who is used to represent God’s children, were eternal and celestial in nature.

**Verse 13:** “Thus wast thou decked with gold and silver; and thy raiment was of fine linen, and silk, and broidered work; thou didst eat fine flour, and honey, and oil: and thou wast exceeding beautiful, and thou didst prosper into a kingdom.”

The Lord clothed the figurative woman in fine attire and beautiful jewelry. This verse continues by saying that she was thus decked or adorned with gold and silver. Gold is typically used in symbolic language to represent the Sun. It represents pure light, wealth, and often associated with the celestial kingdom or the presence of God. In certain usages, it represents God himself. Similarly, silver is the female counterpart of gold. While gold symbolizes the sun, silver symbolizes the moon. Silver typically symbolizes chastity, purity, and eloquence. One can surmise that the Lord had blessed the woman with riches and wealth that were great in the eyes of mortal men as well as the angels of heaven. She, Israel, was truly a blessed people.



Continuing on with the same line of symbolism, the Lord says that the woman's rainment was of fine linen, silk, and brodered work. The word rainment is defined by the American heritage Dictionary as follows.

**Rainment** *n.* clothing; garments

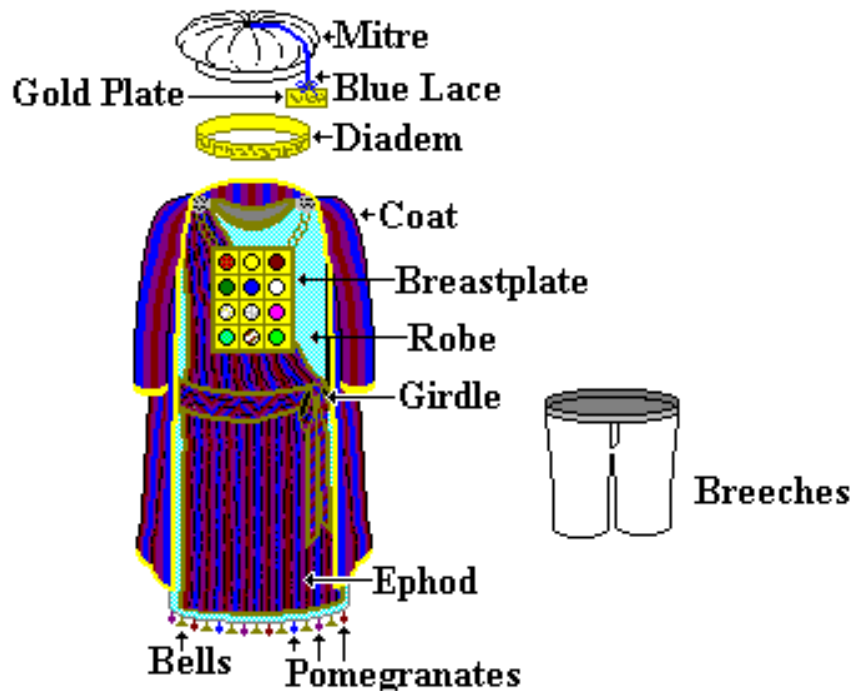
Again we find the Lord referencing the woman's clothes. The terms fine linen, silk, and brodered work have been touched on in the previous verse; however, further discussion is probably warranted at this point. Clothing using these materials is quite significant. Fine materials were difficult to come by and represented wealth and prosperity.

Linen is a "cloth woven from fibers of the flax plant. A number of Hebrew words are translated flax, many of which distinguish between grades or quality of cloth. Rough linen clothing was preferred to wool in the hot season and might be worn by ordinary men and women. Fine linens were luxury items worn by the rich" (*The Revell Concise Bible Dictionary, page 354*). Producing fine linens was extremely hard and required training and skill. In Solomon's days he even created a guild for developing such skills (1<sup>st</sup> Chronicles 4:21). It is interesting to note that bleached, high quality, fine linen is remarkably white representing purity, righteousness, and the blessings of Heaven. Fittingly, fine linen represents the vesture of the bride of Christ. In the ancient Near Easter culture, fine linen represented the earth aspect; however, among the Israelites who faithfully worshipped in the temple it would have taken on a more heavenly meaning.

Fine linens were often further adorned by broiderery. This practice was typically reserved for the rich and famous. In the Old

Testament, we read of King Saul's daughter, "and she had a garment of divers colours upon her: for with such robes were the king's daughters that were virgins apparelled..." (2<sup>nd</sup> Samuel 13:18). Garments of divers colors were basically clothes that had been embroidered. Such clothing carries a very special meaning. "In the Bible, Jacob gives a coat of many colors to his son Joseph as a sign of special favor, an act which provokes Joseph's jealous brothers to take vengeance and brings him into captivity in Egypt. To simple shepherds, a garment of many colors represents privilege and extravagance (The Encyclopedia of Jewish Symbols, Ellen Frankel and Betsy Platkin Teutsch, page 36)." Such clothing was not only a symbol of royalty, but it was also a symbol of purity and divine favor. Perhaps this is part of the reason that the Lord specified that the clothes of the High Priests in the ancient temple be made the way they were. The following is an overview of the clothing of the High Priests.

## The Clothes of the High Priests in the Ancient Temple



*The following is a brief summary of the specific items worn by the ancient High Priests as well as some of the possible symbolic meanings behind them. Note that much of the clothing is highly symbolic and probably goes far beyond this work in meaning.*



## Items or articles of clothing worn by the Israelite High Priest

(See Exodus chapters 28, and 39)

### Mitre

The mitre is a turban, or bonnet. Specifically a linen bonnet. The Lord included a mitre as part of the temple attire as he said, *".....and thou shalt make the mitre of fine linen...."* (Exodus 28:39). The mitre symbolizes the crown of purity and exaltation. It also represents purity of thought

### Ribbon

Ribbons symbolize sovereign or judicial power. It designates the power to bind and to loose. It also symbolizes covenants voluntarily accepted and entered into. The Lord commanded, *"And thou shalt put it on a blue lace, that it may be upon the mitre; upon the forefront of the mitre it shall be. And it shall be upon Aaron's forehead, that Aaron may bear the iniquity of the holy things, which the children of Israel shall hallow in all their holy gifts; and it shall be always upon his forehead, that they may be accepted before the LORD"* (Exodus 28:36-37).

### Gold Plate

The golden plate upon the forehead might explain John's repeated reference to having a name written upon your forehead. It symbolized devotion to the name inscribed. *"And they made the plate of the holy crown of pure gold, and wrote upon it a writing, like to the engravings of a signet, HOLINESS TO THE LORD. And they tied unto it a lace of blue, to fasten it on high upon the mitre; as the LORD commanded Moses"* (Exodus 39:30-31).

### Diadem

A crown worn as a sign of royalty. The diadem was the name given to what was referred to early on in the Old Testament as the holy crown. It was closely associated with the mitre. *"And thou shalt put the mitre upon his head, and put the holy crown upon the mitre"* (Exodus 39:6).

### Coat

*"And thou shalt embroider the coat of fine line...."* (Exodus 28:39). Coats symbolized protections and security.

- Breastplate** A breastplate typically represents protection; however, the breastplate of the High Priests represented the power to judge. *"And thou shalt make the breastplate of judgement with cunning work; after the work of the ephod thou shalt make it; of gold, of blue, and of purple, and of scarlet, and of fine twined linen, shalt thou make it (Exodus 28:15)."*
- Robe** The robe was a dress like garment that laid under the ephod. *"And thou shalt make the robe of the ephod all of blue. And there shall be an hole in the top of it, in the midst thereof: it shall have a binding of woven work round about the hole of it, as it were the hole of an habergeon, that it be not rent (Exodus 28:31-32)."* A robe symbolizes sovereignty. It symbolizes the power of Heaven entrusted to mortal man. It is often phrased, the robes of the priesthood, since the priesthood is the power to act in God's name.
- Girdle** The dictionary defines a girdle as a belt or sash worn around the waist. It is a symbol of strength, consecration, and readiness. The girdle can symbolize one's power. *"And the curious girdle of the ephod, which is upon it, shall be of the same, according to the work thereof; even of gold, of blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine twined linen (Exodus 28:8)."*
- Ephod** The ephod was a side waist coat worn by the priest. Its appearance was to be very specific. The Lord tailored it as follows, *"And they shall make the ephod of gold, of blue, and of purple, of scarlet, and fine twined linen, with cunning work" (Exodus 28:6)*. Josephus said that the ephod represents the four elements of the universe compounded into one.

**Bells,  
Pomegranates, & the  
Hem**

Bells symbolize the connection between heaven and earth. They are often associated with prayer and the voice of God. The pomegranate fruit symbolizes faithfulness. *"And beneath upon the hem of it thou shalt make pomegranates of blue, and of purple, and of scarlet, round about the hem thereof; and bells of gold between them round about: A golden bell and a pomegranate, a golden bell and a pomegranate, upon the hem of the robe round about (Exodus 28:33-34)."* The hem of a garment represents the person's power and authority.

**Breeches**

Breeches were undergarments that covered the hips and the thighs. *"And thou shalt make them linen breeches to cover their nakedness; from the loins even unto the thighs they shall reach (Exodus 28:42)."* Breeches represent the great power of repentance and the atoning graces of Jesus Christ. They, indeed, cover our nakedness.

**Gold**

The color gold symbolizes the sun, eternity, exaltation, and royalty.

**Purple**

The color purple symbolizes royalty, humility and submission.

**Blue**

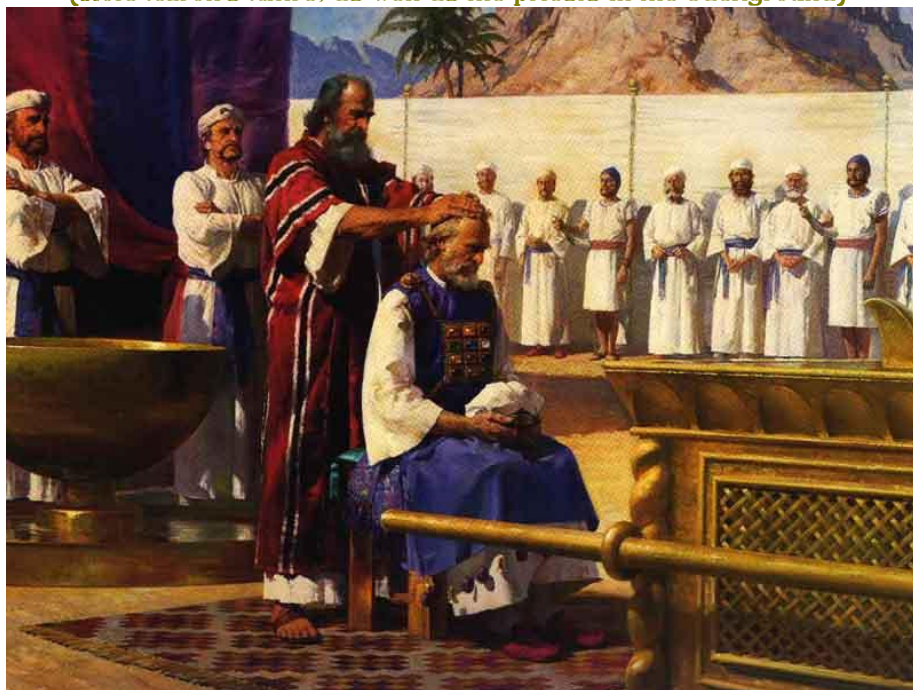
The color blue is a symbol of the sky and heaven.

**Scarlet**

The color scarlet symbolizes blood and the atonement.

**Moses ordaining Aaron a High Priest**

*(Note Aaron's attire, as well as the priests in the background)*



Why bring up the clothing of the High Priest in the commentary of this verse? Though the clothing of the woman has some correlation with the clothes of the High Priests, that is not the major reason. The main reason is this; the covenants associated with eternal marriage are connected with the temple thus creating the connection between the clothing of the temple and the clothing of the woman.

The last part of verse thirteen speaks of the fact that the woman was fed honey, flour and oil. Being fed represents the act of being sustained, cared for, and nourished.

Honey represents the sweetness of the divine word. Honey is also used to represent immortality. It is interesting to note that the term 'honey' used in the Bible is most likely fruit honey and not bee's



honey. Bee's honey was very rare in the Near East. The honey spoken of in the Bible was most likely a syrup made from dates, figs, or grapes. When the Lord spoke of a "**land flowing with milk and honey**" he was probably referencing the fruitfulness of the land. Given this, honey could also represent fruitfulness and fertility. In other applications, honey is used to symbolize rebirth and personal growth.

Flour and oil represent the staples of life in the ancient Near East. Flour can represent fertility, life, and abundance, while oil represents consecration, dedication, and mercy. It is evident that the Lord blessed Israel with many wonderful things. They had His word and His blessings on the Land. They had property and substance. It was said at one point that there was no nation on the face of the earth that was as rich and blessed as Israel.

The Lord concludes this verse with the phrase "*and thou didst prosper into a kingdom*". Moeshe Greenberg says that the phrase should more appropriately read "*fit to be a queen*". It could be pointed out that both translations could find application. Our figurative woman was definitely made into a queen after becoming the Lord's wife. He adorned her with a great many blessings, and she was truly fit to be a queen. On the other hand, the literal sense of the chapter refers to Israel. Israel was symbolized in this verse by the woman. Though one cannot say that Israel was fit to be a queen, Israel did prosper into a kingdom. In fact, under Solomon Israel became a great and powerful nation who was the envy of all the earth.

**Verse 14:** **“And thy renown went forth among the heathen for thy beauty: for it was perfect through my comeliness, which I had put upon thee, saith the Lord GOD.”**

The woman spoken of in this chapter, we are told, was renowned among the heathens for her beauty. The word “renown” means to have a widely known reputation. It carries the connotation of having fame or being acclaimed. In the literal sense, this came to pass when Solomon reigned in Israel. The kingdom was so blessed and great under his rule that even the Queen of Sheba was drawn to Jerusalem to see it with her own eyes. In the day of their destruction it is written, “...*They hiss and wag their head at the daughter of Jerusalem, saying, Is this the city that men call the **Perfection of Beauty**, the joy of the whole earth*” (*Lamentations 2:15*).

The nation of Israel was perfect through the Lord’s comeliness. The term “comeliness” might have better been translated from the Hebrew as “splendor”. Through the splendor of the Lord, Israel was a picture of perfection before the world. Referring back to our analogy, the bride of the Lord was made perfect through the blessings of her new husband. Is there not a message for us here? Is it not through the Lord’s splendor that we become perfected? In fact, there is no other way for this great transformation to take place but through and by Him who created all things.

**Verse 15:** “**But thou didst trust in thine own beauty, and playedst the harlot because of thy renown, and pouredst out thy fornications on every one that passed by; his it was.**”

This verse stands as rebellion to verse fourteen. In fact, verse fifteen stands as a turning point in our story. Up until now, the story has been somewhat of a fairy tale. A poor deserted girl, neglected of all man, was found and cared for by the Lord. He blessed her and cared for her until she developed into a beautiful young woman and eventually became His wife. As His wife, she was further blessed with all that He had, and she became beautiful beyond compare. All of her beauty was attributed to the splendor and generosity of the Lord; however, this verse indicates that the woman began to trust in her own beauty. In other words, she began to forget where all her blessings and fortune came from, and began to think that she had acquired all of her fame and fortune due to her own efforts and not the Lord’s.

To set the stage for the rest of this chapter, one should keep in mind the following scripture, “*And in nothing doth man offend God, or against none is his wrath kindled, save those who confess not his hand in all things, and obey not his commandments*” (*Doctrine and Covenants 59:21*).

Our woman, who is indeed Israel, trusted in her own beauty. In other words, she trusted in her own ability and strength. She failed to

recognize the need for the arm of the Lord and trusted in the arm of flesh. As a consequence, she began to play the harlot, because of her fame and renown. The term 'harlot' is used somewhat figuratively. A literal 'harlot' is one who not only accepts payment for sexual acts, but in fact solicits the opportunity. It is the equivalent to the modern day 'prostitute'. The symbolic story speaks of the woman being a literal 'harlot'. She was married to the Lord, but because of her beauty and the wants of men she solicited men to have sexual relations with her for profit. Figuratively, Israel solicited relationships with neighboring countries, which the Lord had forbidden. Because of Israel's fame, she was admired by many nations. Her pride caused her to disregard the counsel of the Lord and have relationships with these countries. Israel paid in the respect that she gave up that which was most sacred in exchange for the ways, cultures, and wealth of the foreign lands. What was most sacred? The answer is the covenants and blessings that they had received from their God. Amazingly, the Northern Kingdom of Israel had done the exact same thing and was destroyed for it. Hosea, a prophet who lived in the Northern Kingdom around 750 BC and died approximately 736 BC., said, "Though thou, Israel, play the harlot, yet let not Judah offend..." (Hosea 4:14-15). Did Judah listen? Evidently not since Ezekiel was in captivity in Babylonia.

The woman supposedly poured out her fornication unto all that passed by her. The word pour is figurative for sharing, issuing, distributing, and proclaiming. For example, one might pour out judgement, or pour out one's wrath. In this case, the Kingdom of Judah poured or shared her sins with all that visited her walls. She was the Lord's chosen and yet her example was sinful and wicked. To those with whom she fornicated the Lord says, 'his it was'. What the Lord could be saying is that Israel was worthless in their sinful state, and they were welcome to have her; 'his it was'. It should be remembered that when Israel made a covenant with the Lord, they were His and He was theirs. In contrast, the woman (Israel) was no longer the Lord's, now she was his (the heathen nation's and their false god's).



**Verse 16:** "And of thy garments thou didst take, and deckedst thy high places with divers colours, and playedst the harlot thereupon: the like things shall not come, neither shall it be so."

Continuing with the story of the woman's harlotry, the Lord says that she took the sacred garments of her wedding and used them to decorate the high places with diverse colors. The word diverse is defined by the American Heritage Dictionary as follows.

**Diverse** *adj.* 1. Differing one from another 2. Made up of distinct characteristics, qualities, or elements.

The term divers colors is somewhat puzzling. It is a term used in many places in the scriptures. One might remember Joseph's coat of many or divers colors. The entire accounting of the story won't be covered at this time; however, the Bible related that "...Israel loved Joseph more than all his children, because he was the son of his old age: and he made him a coat of many colours" (Genesis 37:3). There is much debate as to what this coat really was. As stated previously, the coat represented Joseph's favor by his father. At the very least, the clothes given to the woman would represent the favor of the Lord. There are some that speculate that Joseph's coat of many colors was much more. The theory is that 'divers colors' was an incorrect translation for 'robe of light or glory'. If such were the case, the wedding garment and Joseph's robe would have a much closer relationship. Even so, the clothes of divers colors given to the woman were sacred, and she used them to decorate what the Lord refers to as a High Place.

High places, as referred to in the Bible, were basically pagan altars and places of heathen worship. To the right is an example of a typical Canaanite High Place. Upon such an altar were committed all manner of iniquity. Ceremonies that consisted of gross atrocities such as human sacrifice and ceremonial acts of prostitution and sex rites were adopted by God's chosen people.

How could one decorate the high places with the clothes given to the woman by the Lord? Symbolically, the clothes represented the great blessings given to the woman by the Lord; both spiritual and physical. By using such blessings at the altars of pagan gods, the Israelites were decorating the wicked place with gifts from a righteous God.

Some suggest that the decorating of the High Places with the clothing of the Lord and playing the Harlot thereupon makes reference

### Ruins of a



### Canaanite High Place

to sexual rituals associated with pagan worship, i.e. cultic prostitution. It is further suggested that the high places symbolize a bed where such acts are performed. Such line of thinking is disgusting; however, it is accepted that such acts were performed in cultic worship and the Israelites definitely adopted this form of worship.

Israel had been unfaithful to the Lord by turning to other gods. In this manner, she committed the worst form of adultery, namely harlotry. Taking it one step further, the acts of worship consisted of cultic prostitution. Israel had also betrayed God by making alliances with other nations for protection rather than trusting in their God. Finally, by their betrayal, the Israelites defiled all that the Lord gave them. It is recorded that the Israelites even violated the temple of Solomon and worshipped false gods there.

The last part of the verse consists of what most feel is an idiom. The interpretations of the phrase, *“the like things shall not come, neither shall it be so”* vary greatly. Most feel that the Lord is basically saying that he will not allow such acts to continue, neither will they. Unfortunately, the real meaning of this idiom probably alludes us.

**Verse 17:** **“Thou hast also taken thy fair jewels of my gold and of my silver, which I had given thee, and madest to thyself images of men, and didst commit whoredom with them.”**

Continuing with the line of gross abominations committed by our symbolic woman, the Lord states that she had taken her fair jewels that were given to her in verses eleven through thirteen and made images with them. Jewels typically symbolize the heart, hidden treasures of knowledge and truth, and wealth. They also represent items of great worth and desire. It is obvious that the woman’s jewels came from the Lord. Israel’s *‘jewels’* were apparently great worldly wealth and treasure as well as great spiritual blessings. They had been blessed by the Lord with precious gold and silver. In fact, they were blessed above all other nations of the earth. In an act of almost blatant disrespect, the Israelites used the rich blessings of the Lord to construct idols. The passage says that the woman made images of men with the Lord’s gold and silver. One should keep in mind that the word idol is another word for image. Ancient civilizations of the Near East commonly constructed idols or gods from inert material

**Stone Carving of the Phoenician god, Baal**





such as gold, silver, stone, or wood. These idols were commonly in the form of men, women and animals. Thinking that the idols they made with their own hands were somehow the personification of a higher power, they sacrificed of their substance and gave of their time to their worship.

At this point in the commentary for chapter sixteen of Ezekiel it is probably prudent to discuss the writings of another Hebrew Prophet whose writings have definite parallelism with this chapter. The Prophet Hosea was commanded of the Lord to take a harlot to wife. The act was a teaching tool for the Northern Kingdom of Israel, and is identical in many ways to this chapter. Like the woman in Ezekiel's story, Hosea's wife was unfaithful. Even so, Hosea pleads with her for her devotion. Hosea asked for her return *"Lest I strip her naked, and set her as in the day that she was born, and make her as a wilderness, and set her like a dry land, and slay her with thirst. And I will not have mercy on her children; for they be the children of whoredoms. For their mother hath played the harlot, she that conceived them hath done shamefully: for she said, I will go after my lovers..."* (Hosea 2:3-5).

In the ancient societies of the Near East, adulterous wives would often be sentenced by their husband to being stripped naked in the Town Square as an act of humiliation to the wife. She could also be publicly beaten or whipped at this point. Finally, she would be banished from the city without clothes or provisions. Cast into the open field or the harsh wilderness she would be subjected to the elements and almost certain death. In both Hosea's analogy and the one being formed here in Ezekiel, there are several comments alluding to this tradition.

The greatest offense against a husband of the ancient societies was the fact that the husband acted a sole provider and caretaker and the woman mocked him by giving herself to others. In Hosea's somewhat factual analogy, the Prophet says that the woman *"...did not know that I gave her corn, and wine, and oil, and multiplied her silver and gold, which they prepared for Baal. Therefore will I return, and take away my corn in the time thereof, and my wine in the season thereof, and will recover my wool and my flax given to cover her nakedness. And now I will discover her lewdness in the sight of her lovers, and none shall deliver her out of mine hand. I will also cause all her mirth to cease, her feast days, her new moons, and her sabbaths, and all her solemn feasts. And I will destroy her vines and her fig trees, whereof she hath said, These are my rewards that my lovers have given me: and I will make them a forest, and the beasts of the field shall eat them. And I will visit upon her the days of Baalim, wherein she burned incense to them, and she decked herself with earrings and her jewels, and she went after her lovers, and forget me, saith the Lord"* (Hosea 2:8-13). Obviously, Hosea's story is alluding to Israel just like

Ezekiel's writing is. The great offense of Israel was the fact that the Lord had cared for her, blessed her, forgiven her sins, and defeated her enemies yet she turned from him for strength and gave her blessings to the heathen nations that surrounded her.

**Verse 18:** **“And tookest thy broidered garments, and coveredst them: and thou hast set mine oil and mine incense before them.”**

When the Lord revealed the ancient temple ceremony to the children of Israel during Moses era, He was specific as to the attire that was to accompany it. In exodus we read, *“And of the blue, and purple, and scarlet, they made cloths of service, to do service in the holy place, and made the holy garments for Aaron; as the LORD commanded Moses” (Exodus 39:1)*. What are these garments? According to the American Heritage Dictionary a garment can be any article of clothing. It should **not** be accepted that the ancient temple garments were just an article of clothing. They were garments of specific design, material, and pattern. They were designed by the hand of God and consequently blessed thereof. The Lord instructed that they be embroidered in an organized fashion. Just as a note, broidery is cloth ornamented or decorated with needlework. The Lord instructed Moses as follows. *“And thou shalt make holy garments for Aaron thy brother for glory and for beauty. And thou shalt speak unto all that are wise hearted, whom I have filled with the spirit of wisdom, that they may make Aaron's garments to consecrate him, that he may minister unto me in the priest's office. And these are the garments which they shall make; a breastplate, and an ephod, and a robe, and a broidered coat, a mitre, and a girdle: and they shall make holy garments for Aaron thy brother, and his sons, that he may minister unto me in the priest's office” (Exodus 28:2-4)*.

The garments of God became a constant symbol of all that God had given His children. The children of Israel were often told to *“Let thy garments be always white; and let thy head lack no ointment” (Ecclesiastes 9:8)*. Such symbolism conveyed the idea that Israel needed to be righteous in order to be worthy of the Lord's blessings. Giving us a slight indication of the strength of a clean garment, Isaiah wrote, *“Awake, awake; put on thy strength, O Zion; put on thy beautiful garments, O Jerusalem, the holy city: for henceforth there shall no more come into thee the uncircumcised and the unclean” (Isaiah 52:1)*.

The Holy Garment is also referred to as the wedding garment. Christ himself gave a wonderful parable that discussed the wedding garment. In a sad story, we find that those who come to the Lord's wedding but have not the wedding garment won't be allowed into the

Lord's presence. The gospel writer recorded, "*And Jesus answered and spake unto them again by parables, and said, The kingdom of heaven is like unto a certain king, which made a marriage for his son, And sent forth his servants to call them that were bidden to the wedding: and they would not come. Again, he sent forth other servants, saying, Tell them, which are bidden, Behold, I have prepared my dinner: my oxen and my fatlings are killed, and all things are ready: come unto the marriage. But they made light of it, and went their ways, one to his farm, another to his merchandise: And the remnant took his servants, and entreated them spitefully, and slew them. But when the king heard thereof, he was wroth: and he sent forth his armies, and destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city. Then saith he to his servants, The wedding is ready, but they which were bidden were not worthy. Go ye therefore into the highways, and as many as ye shall find, bid to the marriage. So those servants went out into the highways, and gathered together all as many as they found, both bad and good: and the wedding was furnished with guests. And when the king came in to see the guests, he saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment: And he saith unto him, Friend, how camest thou in hither not having a wedding garment? And he was speechless. Then said the king to the servants, Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. For many are called, but few are chosen*" (Matthew 22:1-14). Like Ezekiel's story of the Lord's bride, the wedding garment must be preserved to remain in His favor. The garment is associated with marriage for the same reason the Lord refers to His children as His bride. It has to do with the sacred covenant the Lord's Children are required to make with Him. "...Zion must arise and put on her beautiful garments (Doctrine & Covenants 82:14)." The revelator gives us an idea of what will happen to those that don't keep their wedding garment clean. He said, "...Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame" (Revelation 16:15).

This verse in Ezekiel speaks of our figurative woman taking her wedding garment and using it to adorn the false idols that she built. She also took the oil and incense that were given to her of God and presented them to the same idols. Like the garment, oil and incense are also symbols of the Lord's blessings and graces. Israel's sins included a great mockery of God's blessings. They mocked all that was sacred and holy as well as the covenants that they had made with Him.

**Verse 19:** **"My meat also which I gave thee, fine flour, and oil, and honey, wherewith I fed thee, thou hast even set it before them for a sweet savour: and thus it was, saith the Lord GOD."**

The Lord begins by speaking of the fine flour, oil, honey, and meat that He had given to the woman that she might eat. The first three items have already been discussed in verse thirteen; however, the term meat is a new element to this chapter. Like the other terms used with it, it is probably used as a symbol. Meat is typically used symbolically to represent food in general. It also has a relationship with sacrifice and death.

It would appear that the four food substances mentioned in this verse all reference the sustenance and blessings given the Hebrews from their God. He was the source of all that they had. Put symbolically, he fed them.

How did the Israelites repay the Lord for His generosity? This verse says that they put their blessings; the meat, the honey, the fine flour, and the oil before them for a sweet savour. The “them” makes reference to the idols or images spoken of in the previous verse. To the idols were the Lord’s blessings given. Why and how were the Lord’s blessings given to idols? The why is answered in this very verse. The Lord states that they were given as a ‘sweet savour’. An alternate translation for “*sweet savour*” might be “*soothing savour*”, though this doesn’t bring any further clarity to the subject. The dictionary defines a savour as follows.

**Savour or Savor** *n.* Taste or smell of something.

Without understanding the ancient cultures of the Near East the term sweet savour doesn’t bring the answer to the question any closer. Anciently, base idol worship involved doing all in one’s power to please the gods. Temples were constructed and staffed to house and care for the idols. The general population would routinely visit the idol to pay tribute. They would do this by offering the fruits of their labors. They would bring fine foods of all kinds, as well as precious metals, and wealth to care for the idol’s needs and, hopefully, in the process gain his favor. The food they brought to the idol was often called ‘*sweet savour*’. The prophet Hosea said, “*For she did not know that I gave her corn*” (*Hebrew translation says grain*) “*and wine, and oil, and multiplied her silver and gold, which they prepared for Baal*” (*Hosea 2:8*). Basically, Israel was given a land of milk and honey, and they then took the substance of that land and gave their blessings to false idols.

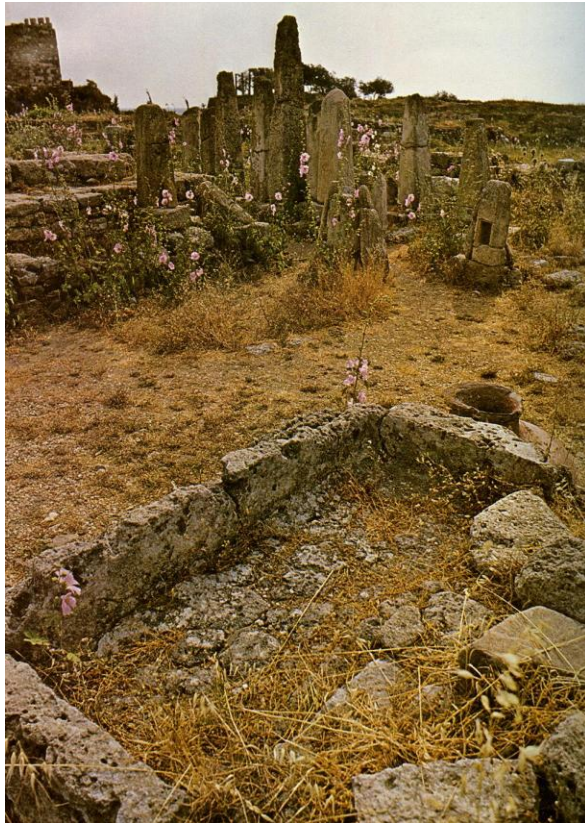
**Verse 20:** “**Moreover thou hast taken thy sons and thy daughters, whom thou hast borne unto me, and these hast thou sacrificed unto them to be devoured. Is this of thy whoredoms a small matter,**”

This verse appears to be more literal than symbolic. The Lord speaks of the figurative woman sacrificing the children that she had “borne unto me”. In other words, she had sacrificed the children she had had with the Lord. This was an actual practice among the children of Israel during Ezekiel’s time period and centuries prior to him.

It should be recalled that the earliest recorded history of Abraham starts with his father delivering him up to a pagan priest so that he might be sacrificed to an idol god. The Lord lead Abraham out of the priest’s hands, but Abraham’s posterity soon found themselves in the land of Canaan surrounded by nations who practiced child sacrifice to pagan gods. By the time Ezekiel’s era came to pass, Israel had fallen prey to this horrible habit. The Prophet Isaiah records, “*Enflaming yourselves with idols under every green tree, slaying the children in the valleys under the cliffs and rocks*” (Isaiah 57:5). The Israelites built idols throughout the country. Their lives revolved around their worship.

They became so engulfed in their worship that they even justified the death of their own children. Jeremiah wrote, “...*they have built the high places...to burn their sons and daughters in the fire...*” (Jeremiah 7:31).

Initially, child sacrifice was only done in times of great need. For example, as the Israelites besieged the Moabite city of King Mesha, the king sacrificed his oldest son to the god Baal hoping that such a sacrifice would enlist the favor of the god on his behalf.



As time went on, the people of the ancient Near East began to embrace the practice of child sacrifice on a more frequent bases and for less crucial reasons. By the days of Jeremiah, the Israelites built shrines called ‘*topheth*’, translated as high places. It was at these shrines that

they would sacrifice their children, bleed them of their blood, burn them, and bury their ashes in jars. The picture to the right shows an ancient 'topheth'. The stone basin was used for child sacrifice and was instrumental in collecting the child's blood. The jar above the basin was typical of the jars in which a child's ashes would be placed. Despite this gross practice, Israel had adopted this ritual as part of their culture. Jeremiah explained, "They have built also high places to Baal, to burn their sons with fire for burnt offerings unto Baal..." (Jeremiah 19:5).

There is some confusion as to whom the Israelites worshipped, and to whom they sacrificed their children. As clearly stated by



**Statue Idol of Baal**

Jeremiah, they sacrificed their children to the pagan god 'Baal'. Even so, elsewhere in Jeremiah's record he states that they sacrificed their children to 'Moloch'. 'Moloch' or 'Molech' was the Hebrew name for an Ammorite idol, whose name is very similar to the Hebrew word for 'king'. 'Moloch' was the god of the Ammorite king, making him the national god if you will. The word 'king' in Hebrew is 'melek'. Many scholars believe that the Ammorite god was in reality the god 'Baal'. The theory is that the Hebrews merged the consonants of 'melek' (the word 'king') with the vowels in the word 'boshet'. The word 'boshet' is the Hebrew equivalent of the English word 'shame'. The new word would thus represent a mockery of the national deity of the Ammorites, calling 'Baal' the 'shameful king'.

'Baal', pronounced BAY-al, was the god of weather, fertility, and the seasons. In addition, Baal was also known as the god of war and crops. To the Phoenicians, Baal was also the god of the sun, and acted as their supreme god. His name means literally 'lord' or 'master'. "Those who worshipped Baal felt that such worship would ensure the generative and reproductive power of the soil and their animals as well as themselves. Settled in Canaan, Israel became a more sedentary, agricultural people,



**The Canaanite and Phoenician god 'Baal'**

whereas before they had been more nomadic. Their dependence upon the productivity of the soil enticed them to turn to the worship of Baal. In such worship, with its emphasis on fertility, such practices as ritual prostitution of both sexes became rampant. Those who engaged in such practices were referred to by the Lord as sodomites. Other terms, such as high places, images, groves, high hills, green trees, were all associated with false and reprehensible forms of worship which often led Israel far from the Lord (Old Testament Student Manual Religion 302 1<sup>st</sup> Kings – Malachi, 4-25, page 46).”

Baal eventually became the chief god of the Israelites. Many might feel that this action replaced Jehovah in Israelite worship.



**Baal**

Though spiritually that statement is probably true, the Israelites practiced a religion that believed in many, many gods. As the religions of the Phoenicians, the Canaanites, and Egyptians became more and more prevalent among their society, Jehovah became but another idol. The worship of Jehovah was adopted to fit within a multiple deity society. In such a society, each god or idol took on a specific role. There was no longer a god of all things, but rather a community of gods that were specific to their duties. People could adopt their favorite god and build personal alters and



**Baal**

shrines to his image within their own homes. Sacrifice and incense were often given to confines of the family. things that were very lifestyle, he quickly choice. Many feel that the Babylonian god further information on Babylonian religious **D – The Religion Babylonia**. Though deed abandoned the felt as though he was They felt that they still



**Marduk**

the idol within the Since Baal represented important to the Israelite took over as the god of Baal is the same deity as named 'Marduk'. For the god Marduk and the system see **Appendix and Culture of** the Israelites had in true and living god, they still part of their lives. honored and respected

him in their religious services and therefore had not fallen from his graces.

In our figurative story, the Lord Jehovah asks his symbolic wife if the whoredom of sacrificing the children she had born unto him were a small matter. In the Book of Deuteronomy we read, “*Ye are the children of the Lord your God...thou art an holy people unto the Lord thy God, and the Lord hath chosen thee to be a peculiar people unto himself...*” (Deuteronomy 14:1-2). As His children, the offense of child sacrifice was particularly offensive to the Lord. In fact, can there be a more hideous offense before the Lord than to murder one of His little ones to an idol of Satan? Even so, the tone of this verse sounds as though the Israelites didn’t necessarily see this.

**Verse 21:** “**That thou hast slain my children, and delivered them to cause them to pass through the fire for them?**”

Continuing from verse twenty, the Lord exclaims to the woman, “*Thou hast slain my children*”. In our figurative story, the children were offspring of the Lord and His wayward wife. Taking the story to the literal interpretation, the Israelites, who are represented as the woman, had literally sacrificed their children to false gods. These sacrifices are discussed in the commentary for verse twenty; however, this verse points out a very important piece of doctrine. Though the story is figurative, the fact is the people of this earth are the children of God. When we abuse, mistreat, or offend any man, woman, or child in this earth we do so at the risk of offending the Father of all creation. We should remember that despite the disposition of those children, they are His children.

The Israelites slayed the Lord’s children. They did so physically and spiritually. Verse twenty-one speaks of the Israelite parents delivering their children up to pagan priests so that they could be sacrificed in a ritual burying. Many of the pagan gods worshipped by the Israelites





required the sacrificial death and burning of their children. To the right is a picture of a Near Eastern High Place. In the rear is an oven used for the burning of children. The ashes of the sacrifices were then placed in clay pots, as well as the blood collected prior to the burning. Both the blood and ashes from these sacrifices were believed to have divine properties. Both could be used to increase the fertilities of crops, people, and animals. The ashes were often spread over fields to add the blessings of the gods to a future bountiful harvest.



When verse twenty-one speaks of passing children through the fire, it is speaking of this form of pagan worship. In this way they did physically sacrifice their children. Spiritually, they sacrificed their children's salvation by not living up to the covenants they made with the Lord. They failed to teach them who the Lord God was, and how to properly worship him. They also failed to teach them the saving doctrines of the Gospel. Basically, if we fail to do this in our day, we have sacrificed the Lord's children to the adversary.

**Verse 22:** “**And in all thine abominations and thy whoredoms thou hast not remembered the days of thy youth, when thou wast naked and bare, and wast polluted in thy blood.**”

This verse acts as a reminder from the Lord. Despite all that the Lord had done for her in years past, how is it that she does not remember Him? He reminds her that she was once naked and He clothed her. She was once polluted in her own blood and He washed her. Her state was one of neglect and poverty and He took her in and gave her all that He had. For further commentary on the items mentioned in this verse read the commentary for verses one through eight.

**Verse 23-24:** “And it came to pass after all thy wickedness, (woe, woe unto thee! saith the Lord GOD;) That thou hast also built unto thee an eminent place, and hast made thee an high place in every street.”

This verse might indicate that the sins of idolatry didn't enter into Israel overnight. It came after 'all thy wickedness'. It might be implied that Israel first partook in such sins as haughtiness, pride, selfishness, and greed. As these sins entered their life, the spirit of God withdrew and allowed Satan to enter among them. At this point Israel was well on its way down the road of transgression. Unfortunately, Israel allowed Satan to lead them so far down the road that they built eminent places and high places in order to perform gross sacrifices and offenses to their pagan gods. Of this the Lord says 'woe, woe'. The dictionary defines the word woe as follows.

**Woe** *n.* Deep distress or misery, as from grief; wretchedness.

The Sins of the Lord's children caused him deep sorrow, and though they did not realize it, it would also result in great and terrible sorrow on their part.

The Lord speaks of high places and eminent places, which had been erected by the Israelites. Unlike Solomon's temple, which represented the dwelling place of Jehovah, sanctuaries for Baal were built in many places. Allen Menzies said, *“Each place has its own Baal, who is worshipped at a local sanctuary. The sanctuary is at an elevated spot outside the town or village, either on a natural eminence or on a mound artificially made for the purpose; these are the high places of the Old Testament; originally Canaanite places of worship, they drew to themselves also the worship of Israel. The apparatus of worship at these shrines is of a very simple nature. An upright stone represents the god; He was supposed to come to the stone when meeting with his worshippers; and in the earliest times of Semetic religion, this stone served the purpose of an altar; the gifts which were not originally burned, were laid upon it, or the blood of the victim was applied to it. But, besides the altar and the upright stone of ‘massebah’ the Canaanite shrine had another piece of furniture. A massive tree-trunk, fixed in the ground and with some of its branches perhaps still remaining, represented the female deity, who is the invariable companion of the Baal. This is the ‘Ashera’ of Canaan, a word which in the Authorized Version, is translated ‘grove’, after an error of the Vulgate, but which in the Revised Version is rightly left untranslated. The word Ashera is in such passages the designation of the trees which*

stood to represent the goddess” (*The Influence of Canaanite Baalism on Israel*, Reed C. Durham Jr., page 4).

Though the actual protocol for all of the pagan forms of worship might have been lost “*The general rites of idolatrous worship consist in burning incense; in offering bloodless sacrifice, as the dough-cakes and libations [Jeremiah 7:18], and the raisin-cakes [Hosea 3:1]: in sacrificing victims [1<sup>st</sup> Kings 18:26]; and especially in human sacrifices...These offerings were made on high places, hills, and roofs of houses, or in shady groves and valleys. Some forms of idolatrous worship had libidinous orgies...Divinations, oracles [2<sup>nd</sup> Kings 1:2], and rabdomancy [Hosea 4:12] form a part of many of these false religions. The priesthood was generally a numerous body; and where persons of both sexes were attached to the service of many gods (like that of Ashtoreth), that service was infamously immoral” (*Bible Encyclopedia*, Fallows, 2:850).*

Idol worship might seem silly to us of a modern society; however, it should be remembered that the Far East, which represents much of the population of the earth, still worships idols of metal, stone and wood. They pray to them, offer the sacrifice of their substance, and erect shrines to them even in their own homes. These inanimate statues take the place of a true and living god. People turn to them for strength and support rather than the creator of all living.



**Buddhist Temple**



**A Large Statue of Buddha being Worshipped in Japan**

Should it make us feel better in a western society that we have for the most part abandoned the religious worship of idols like Buddha? Such a thought offers a false sense of righteousness. It is very evident that the west has abandoned idols in sanctuaries for such idols as cars, houses, sporting events, large boats, monetary wealth, and other such material things. Though we don't sacrifice to them in high places, we do sacrifice our lives, our families, and all that we have for obtaining them. Do we still worship Idols? Yes, maybe more than ever.

For ancient Israel, sanctuaries and idols became so prevalent that they were seen on every street and every hill. The same can probably be said for our idols. They are seen on every television, on every billboard, and in almost every publication.

**Verse 25:** **“Thou hast built thy high place at every head of the way, and hast made thy beauty to be abhorred, and hast opened thy feet to every one that passed by, and multiplied thy whoredoms.”**

As one travels through many areas of the Orient idols will be seen in the most peculiar places. Guardian idols are placed at the entrances to homes, sanctuaries, and business establishments. Fertility idols are placed on street corners by fields to assure good crops. Small idols are placed in gardens and yards to preserve their beauty. Idols are purchased for graves to look after those that have passed beyond this sphere. It would appear that ancient Israel had adopted the same culture. They placed idols at the head of every way. The phrase *“at every head of the way”* could have been translated as *“at the head of every street”*. The mentality was the same



**Japanese Guardian Idol**



**Small Buddha's in a Japanese Cemetery**

as the one of the Orient. Their beliefs led them to believe that the gods could care after their every need and want. Unfortunately, in spite of the devotion of the Israelites to these idols, their blessings were as lifeless as they were.

Such devotion, whether it is to stone idols or cars and wealth, shows a lack of faith in the God of Heaven. It also serves as a mockery to everything with which he has blessed us. How hurt the Lord must be by our idolatrous behavior.

The Lord indicates that the placement of the high, or as previous discussed, eminent places and idols throughout the land caused our figurative woman's beauty to be abhorred. The dictionary defines the words '*eminent*' and '*abhor*' as follows.

**Eminent** *adj.* Towering or standing out above others; predominant, an eminent peak.

**Abhor** *tr. v.* 1. To regard with horror or loathing 2. To reject vehemently; shun.

Understanding this part of the verse comes by understanding verse seven of this same chapter. The Lord had originally taken Israel unto Himself. In the process, He prospered and beautified her. This beauty came through her commitment and faithfulness to Him. Now we see that she has become wicked and unfaithful. The consequence was a shunning of the Lord's blessings or her beauty.

The High Places are being likened by the Lord in our figurative story as a house of ill repute or a symbolic brothel. Though it might seem odd that such a discussion is taking place in the Holy Scriptures, the Lord states that our figurative woman opens her legs to every one that passes by. An alternate translation for the term "*feet*" is "*legs*" and the term "*opened*" is "*parted*". Figuratively, the Lord's wife slept with every stranger that entered her parlor. This is referencing the fact that the House of Israel built sanctuaries to other gods throughout the land and committed acts of unfaithfulness by worshipping therein. Some of those acts of worship even involved immoral acts of sexual worship. Israel went one step further by adopting the gods and practices of almost every nation with whom they came in contact. They worshipped Egyptian, Assyrian, Phoenician, Philistine, and Babylonian gods as well as their cultures, not to mention those from many other unnamed nations. In so doing, Israel multiplied her sins against her loving and caring husband, the God of Heaven.

**Verse 26:** **“Thou hast also committed fornication with the Egyptians thy neighbours, great of flesh; and hast increased thy whoredoms, to provoke me to anger.”**

During the time in which this chapter was written by the Lord's Prophet Ezekiel, the Kingdom of Judah was plotting with the Egyptians

to break away from the Babylonians. They were symbolically giving themselves to the Egyptians, rather than turning to their figurative husband, for protection. Indeed, this furthered their sins against the Lord Jehovah.

The Egyptians are referred to as great of flesh. There are several possible interpretations to the meaning of this phrase. One possible interpretation is the fact that flesh represents mortality and the world, hence, the Egyptians were very worldly, and base. Another interpretation might be that they were great in wealth and power. Taking it one step further, many Bible Scholars feel that the reference is made to the male reproductive organ, using Genesis 17:13 and Leviticus 15:2 as supporting references (Ezekiel 1-20, Meoshe Greenberg, page 282). Even so, the correlation between baseness and worldly standards remains the same.

## The Location of Egypt



**Verse 27:** “Behold, therefore I have stretched out my hand over thee, and have diminished thine ordinary food, and delivered thee

unto the will of them that hate thee, the daughters of the Philistines, which are ashamed of thy lewd way.”

Due to all of Israel’s sins, the Lord says that he has stretched out His hand over them. It should be remembered from previous chapters that the symbol of the hand represents the Lord’s ability to act and command. Basically, the Lord diminished or reduced their access to the necessities of life. Ordinary food represents the essentials of life. As discussed in previous chapters, the Lord was going to break the staff of bread. Finally, the Lord was going to deliver them into the hands of their enemies. All this was being done by the Lord, not out of cruelty, but rather in an attempt to humble them and in order to bring a memory of Him back to their minds.



The enemy spoken of was none other than the Philistines. One might find a slight deal of confusion in this since the Philistines, according to history, hadn’t truly ruled over Judah since the early days of the Israelite Empire. This confusion can be settled by knowing that “...at the end of the eighth century B.C.E. Sennacherib awarded to the faithful Philistine cities Ashdod, Ekron, and Gaza (= Philistine women) the Judaeen territories adjacent to them” (Ezekiel 1-20, Moeshe Greenberg, page 282). Basically, the ruling Assyrian Empire made the Philistines governors over the Judaeen Empire. The Philistines and their history could easily be compiled into a book; however, for the purpose of this book a very short description of them is given as follows.

**Philistines** – The name means “immigrants”. Based on this fact alone many suspect that they were foreigners to the Holy Land. Scholars have theorized that they were originally a people from the island of Crete, brought to the Holy Lands due to some catastrophe on Crete. Their original kingdom was what was later called the Kingdom of Judah. The Philistines hated the Jews with a passion. This is, for the most part, due to the fact that the Philistines lost their land to them. Both King Saul and King David dealt them decisive defeats. In fact, the

## David & Goliath



famed story of David and Goliath is really a story of the war between the Israel and the Philistines. Goliath was the greatest of the Philistine warriors.

The term Philistine women is used to represent Philistine cities. The term women is often used symbolically to represent cities, nations, or peoples. It was to these cities that the Israelites were to be subjected. They were to have their will with Israel. The term 'will' meaning the appetite, greed and desire. Obviously, the Philistines had desired many things of Israel for many years, and now Israel was going to experience the reality of that will.

## The Kingdom of Judah & The Three Governing Cities of Philistia





**Verse 28-29:** “Thou hast played the whore also with the Assyrians, because thou wast unsatiable; yea, thou hast played the harlot with them, and yet couldst not be satisfied. Thou hast moreover multiplied thy fornication in the land of Canaan unto Chaldea; and yet thou wast not satisfied herewith.”

*“Apostasy is expressed by ‘zana’, ‘go whoring’ in Exodus 34:14 and Numbers 15:39 (Ezekiel 1-20, Moeshe Greenberg, page 298).”* Obviously, the same conditions exist in this verse. The whoring of the Israelites represents their apostasy; but this analogy goes one step further. The Hebrews basically had an affair with the Assyrians, and worse yet they paid for their sin up front. Greenberg said, *“Judah’s ‘affair’ with the Assyrians began when Ahaz sent a ‘present’ and an offer of vassalship to Tiglath-pileser III, seeking his help against an Israelite-Aramean attack [2<sup>nd</sup> Kings 16:7, Isaiah 7-8]”* (Ezekiel 1-20, Meoshe Greenberg, page 282). In reality, Ahaz raped the Temple of Solomon of its beauty to pay for Assyria’s favor. He stripped the temple her silver and gold as well as many of her precious treasures.

Just prior to the Assyrian takeover of the Kingdom of Israel, Judah saw the potential threat of the new world power. Fearing their shear and utter defeat, they looked for ways to appease the Assyrians. This was done by giving the Assyrians of the gifts that the Lord had given them. Such harlotry continued with the next king of Judah. After the fall of the Kingdom Israel, Hezekiah became king of Judah and again offered the Assyrians more of the Temple treasures to keep their relationship peaceful.

Even though their actions indicated devotion to the Assyrians, the Israelites were far from faithful. Hezekiah symbolically had an affair with Babylonia when he received emissaries from Nabopolassar prior to the Assyrian overthrow. Later they did the same with the Egyptians. Such was the faithfulness of Judah. It is easy to see why the Lord chose the symbol of the whore to represent the Hebrews.

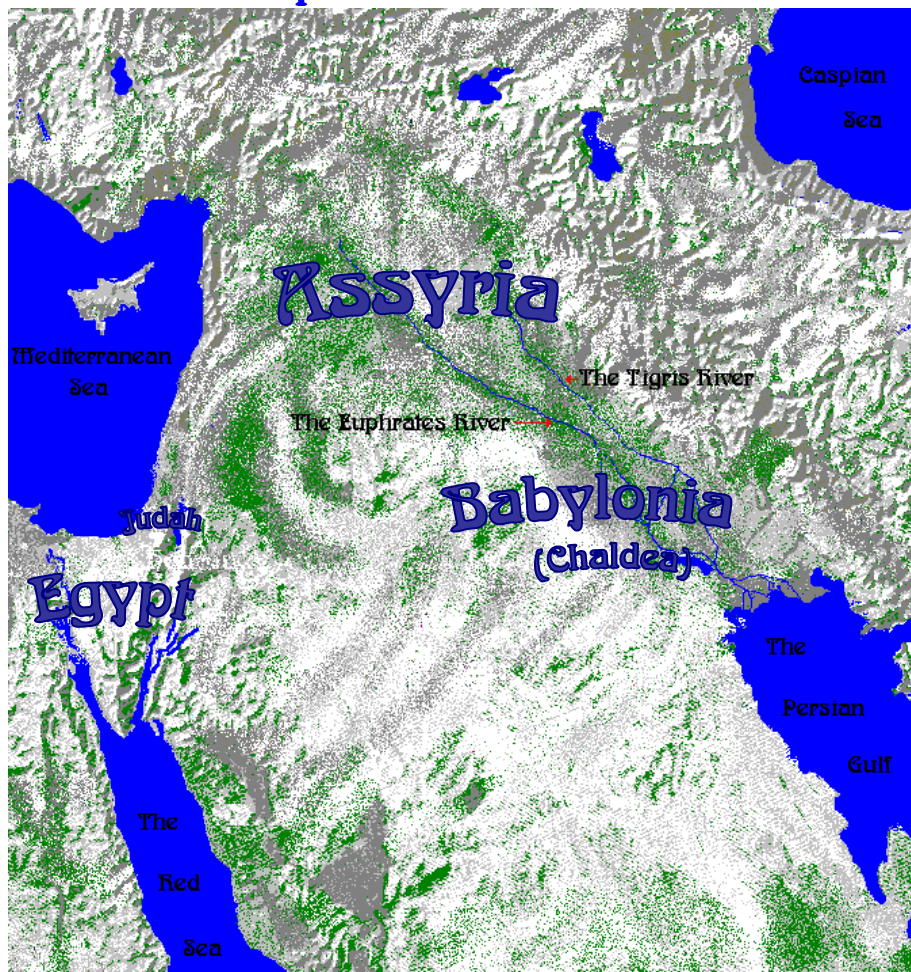
To get a better understanding of who the Assyrians were the following brief summary is given hereafter.

**Assyrians** were a warlike group of people that developed into a great nation. They would eventually dominate the entire region of the Middle East. This occurred between 911BC to 609 BC. Their rule finally ended when the Babylonians enlisted the help of the Medes and overthrew them. The Assyrians were known for their great cities, extravagant architecture, and fortifications. They required great amounts of wealth and labor to build their Empire. This led them on many campaigns to acquire wealth and slaves. They established a

practice of slave exchange. In order to break a conquered country's spirits and hamper them from revolt they would often exchange the entire population with another conquered population. Living in a land that was not their own gave very little incentive to fight for ownership of the land. Despite their warlike behavior, the Assyrians were very religious and superstitious. Their religion, however was idolatry at its fullest. They were prone to drunkenness, prostitution, theft, murder, human sacrifice, and other such acts that accompany wicked civilizations.

One final note should be made regarding this verse before continuing. The Lord states that despite their efforts with the Assyrians, Babylonians, and others, Judah was still not satisfied. The question might be asked, "Can sin ever satisfy?" The Book of Mormon Prophet Alma taught, "...wickedness never was happiness" and yet how often do we search after happiness in the world of sin. Judah might have thought that turning away from their God and negotiating with the wicked nations of the world would bring them peace and happiness, but the opposite was the result.

## The Empires of Ezekiel's Time



**Verse 30:** “How weak is thine heart, saith the Lord GOD, seeing thou doest all these things, the work of an imperious whorish woman;”

Through His Prophet, the Lord asks His figurative wife how weak her heart is. The heart is the center of all feeling and emotion. It quite often represents one’s spiritual self, one’s self will, and one’s true self. Typically, if one’s heart governs one’s life one can expect a life of compassion, selflessness, and spiritual strength. Israel was so weak in the areas associated with the heart that they found themselves following the desires of their body and mind. The body and mind represent worldly desires, earthly reason, and physical wants. The Lord is basically asking Israel how her heart can be so weak that it is ruled by the things of this world.



Furthermore, the Lord likens His weak hearted wife to a imperious whorish woman. The word “*imperious*” carries the idea of being commandingly arrogant. Obviously, she believed her actions to be correct. She had no doubt reasoned out her action in her mind as right in the sight of God and man. Oblivious of her wrong doing, she broke all of her covenants and severed all connection with the spiritual and godly. She then proceeded to offer that which was sacred and priceless to the strangers of the land that she might get gain. No wonder the Lord likens her to a whorish woman.

**Verse 31-32:** “In that thou buildest thine eminent place in the head of every way, and makest thine high place in every street; and hast not been as an harlot, in that thou scornest hire; But as a wife that committeth adultery, which taketh strangers instead of her husband!”

Again referencing the fact that Israel had built eminent places and high places, the Lord points out that there is one difference between Israel and a true harlot. A true harlot would not ‘*scornest hire*’. In other words, unlike a typical harlot Israel refuses payment for services. One might ask, ‘how did Israel not prosper from her decisions?’ Obviously, her affair with other gods was fruitless. She left the trust and graces of the Lord Jehovah for lifeless gods that could render no reward and yet she serviced and cared for them. In the case of the foreign nations that she committed affairs with, they offered very little and gave even less. Israel left one figurative lover for another and each time she paid more than she received for her adultery. The Lord finally ends with the conclusion that the woman, Israel, is more like a cross between a harlot and an adulterous woman. An adulterous woman

typically cheats on her husband with someone whom she has come to love or at least has feelings for. This she does not for gain but for that fact that her emotions are driving her actions. Israel's actions were not driven by any such love or devotion. She committed whoredom without pay and without emotional commitment. Taking strangers rather than her husband to whom she had committed her faithfulness.

From the Lord's perspective, the sanctuaries and altars built for the pagan gods of the land by the Israelites were no more than places of adultery; spiritual and eternal adultery. They were equal to the physical brothels of the whore.

### Picture of Near East High Place Canaanite Altar/High Place in Megiddo



**Verse 33:** “They give gifts to all whores: but thou givest thy gifts to all thy lovers, and hirest them, that they may come unto thee on every side for thy whoredom.”

Continuing on with the odd comparison between being a harlot and an adulterer, the Lord continues His explanation. According to the Lord, the strangers that came unto Israel for the services of a harlot gave gifts or payment to all the harlots which they frequented; however, in Israel's case she was required to give payment and gifts to the strangers. She obviously invited the acts of harlotry offering payment to all that would frequent her.



**Verse 34:** “**And the contrary is in thee from other women in thy whoredoms, whereas none followeth thee to commit whoredoms: and in that thou givest a reward, and no reward is given unto thee, therefore thou art contrary.**”

The term ‘*contrary*’ carries the idea of mutually exclusive differences or direct and willful opposition. So different was Israel in her sins from others that had gone before her that the Lord classified her as contrary. Her contrary behavior was such that the Lord says ‘none’ will follow thee in thy whoredoms or sins. This is a very interesting statement since most peoples’ experience with sin is that it is usually followed by sin. Men are unfortunately easy prey to their environment. No wonder the Lord has commanded His children to stand in holy places. A sinful environment is usually a major contributing influence for others to engage in sin. Judah made an exception to this rule. Her sins were grave and her rewards were few. No wonder no one followed her.

**Verse 35-36:** “**Wherefore, O harlot, hear the word of the LORD: Thus saith the Lord GOD: Because thy filthiness was poured out, and thy nakedness discovered through thy whoredoms with thy lovers, and with all the idols of thy abominations, and by the blood of thy children, which thou didst give unto them;**”

These two verses represent a call from the Lord to His wayward wife. He is calling His wife unto judgement, and the above verses are the reasons for His actions. It is apparent at this point in Ezekiel’s writing that the Lord is repeating much of His message several times in this chapter. No doubt He wants to leave no question as to His feeling regarding His wife’s actions. Judgement will be given because of the sins Judah committed with all of her neighbors. Her sins, or nakedness, shall be discovered because of the idols she had turned to and the sacrifices she had made unto them.



An interesting note should be made at this point. The Lord himself had commanded the Hebrews to make altars unto Him and offer sacrifice thereon. He said, “*An altar of earth thou shalt make unto me, and shalt sacrifice thereon thy burnt offerings, and thy peace offerings, thy sheep, and thine oxen: in all places where I record my name I will come unto thee, and I will bless thee. And if thou wilt make me an altar of stone, thou shalt not build it of hewn stone: for if thou lift up thy tool upon it, thou hast polluted it. Neither shalt thou go up by steps unto mine altar, that thy nakedness be not discovered*”

*thereon*” (*Exodus 20:24-26*). Proper use of the Lord’s altar offered forgiveness of ones sins, the covering of one’s nakedness. The use of pagan altars offered no such gift. In fact, pagan altars offered nothing but the exposing of ones sins. Due to the fact that the Hebrews had not only worshipped at these pagan altars, but they killed their children upon them to appease the lifeless gods of their wicked neighbors, the Lord’s judgement was being called upon them. The Lord would no longer tolerate her actions.

**Verse 37:** **“Behold, therefore I will gather all thy lovers, with whom thou hast taken pleasure, and all them that thou hast loved, with all them that thou hast hated; I will even gather them round about against thee, and will discover thy nakedness unto them, that they may see all thy nakedness.”**

In our symbolic story, the Lord’s wife, having been convicted of adultery, is told by her husband that he was going to gather all her lovers, those she loved and those she hated. Her lovers would be gathered around her that her nakedness might be revealed. As stated previously, convicted adulterous women in the Near Eastern society were often stripped and displayed publicly. Their nakedness was revealed to all those among whom she lived. Obviously, the Lord’s symbolic story was following suit with the typical traditions of the society. He was going to do what would be expected of a faithful husband who had been shamed by His wife.

Applying this verse from our figurative story to its literal counterpart is a little more complicated. The symbols of the woman and the Lord haven’t changed. The Lord is still the Savior and the woman is still representative of the Kingdom of Judah. Judah, the Lord’s wife, had committed symbolic acts of adultery by turning from the Lord, with whom she had covenanted, and worshipping idols along with developing relationships with foreign nations. For this, the Lord was going to expose Judah’s sins and weaknesses before the world, more specifically, before all those with whom she had sinned. As stated in the chapter preview, the Kingdom of Judah hosted an Anti-Babylonian conference in Jerusalem in the year 594 BC. Attending this conference were nearly all of the countries that Judah had played the harlot with over the years. Those that she loved and those that she hated gathered with a common goal, the overthrow of Judah’s current lover, Babylonia. The climax of this story is reached in the winter of 589 BC when Babylonia laid siege on Jerusalem. Stripped of all protection, her lovers stood back and watched the Babylonians mock and disgrace her. For eighteen long months, Jerusalem suffered the pain and embarrassment dealt to her by King Nebuchadnezzar while

those she had loved and those she had hated watched her nakedness revealed.

The term 'nakedness' is discussed in much more detail in verse eight of this chapter; however, it should be touched on briefly at this point for the clarification of this verse. Nakedness represents one's sins along with the shame, embarrassment, and guilt that accompany it.

It should be recalled that while Adam and Eve were in the Garden of Eden they knew no sin. They were innocent and incapable of sin. Because of the state that they were in, their nakedness was not



### Adam & Eve being Cast Out of the Garden of Eden

noticed. They could not be held accountable for that which they did not know. Upon eating the fruit that had been forbidden them of Father, they gained a knowledge of good and evil. This knowledge led them to literally and symbolically discover their nakedness. The act of discovering their sin or nakedness has come to be known as the fall. Because of the fall, Adam and Eve were cast out of the Garden of Eden. There is much that we can learn from this simple story. Some of us live much of our lives convincing ourselves that some of our sins are not sins at all. Yet, for all of us we will one day awaken to realize what we really are. The Prophet Nephi taught of the Great Judgement and said, *"Wherefore, we shall have a perfect knowledge of all our guilt, and our uncleanness, and our nakedness; and the righteous shall have a perfect knowledge of their enjoyment, and their righteousness, being clothed with purity, yea, even with the robe of righteousness"* (2<sup>nd</sup> Nephi 9:14).

The destruction of Jerusalem was apparently an eye opener for the Judaeans. As they were starved and diseased by the lengthy siege they would have soon come to the conclusion that their idols were not going to save them. They probably began to remember the days when Jehovah had cared for them and defeated their enemies at their feet. It is sure that at some point they also realized that they had sinned against their God and what they were enduring was His bitter judgements. Of this same topic Mormon wrote, *"For behold, when ye shall be brought to see your nakedness before God, and also the glory of God, and the holiness of Jesus Christ, it will kindle a flame of unquenchable fire*

upon you” (Mormon 9:5). Let us pray that we are smart enough to hear the Lord’s warnings before our nakedness is uncovered and the judgements of God are full before us.

**Verse 38:** “**And I will judge thee, as women that break wedlock and shed blood are judged; and I will give thee blood in fury and jealousy.**”

In the ancient Near East, the husband of an adulterous wife had the right to pass judgement on his wife. He could pass mercy on her or as severe a judgement as death. More often than not the law provided the husband with clear and decisive direction towards the judgement of death. In the ancient Mesopotamian law document known as the Code of Hammurabi, it is recorded, “#129 - *If the wife of a seignior has been caught while lying with another man, they shall bind them and throw them into the water. If the husband of the woman wishes to spare his wife, then the king in turn may spare his subject*” (The Ancient Near East – Volume 1, edited by James B. Pritchard, page 152). Even the law of the Bible called for the severe judgement. Leviticus reads, “*And the man that committeth adultery with another man's wife, even he that committeth adultery with his neighbour's wife, the adulterer and the adulteress shall surely be put to death*” (Leviticus 20:10). Likewise, we can read in Deuteronomy, “*If a man be found lying with a woman married to an husband, then they shall both of them die, both the man that lay with the woman, and the woman: so shalt thou put away evil from Israel*” (Deuteronomy 22:22). Could you imagine such a law in our day and age, over half the population of the United States would be put to death. The Lord, in our symbolic story, declared that he will not forgo His right to pass judgement on His adulterous wife. In the literal sense, the Lord states that he will pass judgement of Judah like a husband would pass upon a wife who has broken her marriage covenants and in addition has murdered her children.



It is interesting that the word ‘wedlock’ is used rather than marriage. The term ‘wedlock’ carries the meaning of being locked or bound by covenant as husband and wife. Judah had broken her covenant with the Lord that Jehovah would be their God, and that they would be His people. In the process of breaking this sacred covenant they also shed blood. The blood of their children. No wonder this verse speaks of the Lord’s fury.





The prophet Hosea, who lived in similar circumstances, was asked of the Lord to marry a harlot. He entered into the marriage covenant with her as a sign unto Israel as to what they were doing to the Lord. Hosea's harlot wife willingly made the marriage covenant but soon thereafter broke it and committed all acts of adultery. Hosea came to his children to enlist their help. His words are recorded as follows.


*“Plead with your mother, plead: for she is not my wife, neither am I her husband: let her therefore put away her whoredoms out of her sight, and her adulteries from between her breasts; **Lest I strip her naked**, and set her as in the day that she was born, and make her as a wilderness, and set her like a dry land, and slay her with thirst. And I will not have mercy upon her children; for they be the children of whoredoms. For their mother hath played the harlot: she that conceived them hath done shamefully: for she said, I will go after my lovers, that give me my bread and my water, my wool and my flax, mine oil and my drink. Therefore, behold, I will hedge up thy way with thorns, and make a wall, that she shall not find her paths. And she shall follow after her lovers, but she shall not overtake them; and she shall seek them, but shall not find them: then shall she say, I will go and return to my first husband; for then was it better with me than now. For she did not know that I gave her corn, and wine, and oil, and multiplied her silver and gold, which they prepared for Baal. Therefore will I return, and take away my corn in the time thereof, and my wine in the season thereof, and will recover my wool and my flax given to cover her nakedness. And now will I discover her lewdness in the sight of her lovers, and none shall deliver her out of mine hand. I will also cause all her mirth to cease, her feast days, her new moons, and her sabbaths, and all her solemn feasts. And I will destroy her vines and her fig trees, whereof she hath said, These are my rewards that my lovers have given me: and I will make them a forest, and the beasts of the field shall eat them. And I will visit upon her the days of Baalim, wherein she burned incense to them, and she decked herself with her earrings and her jewels, and she went after her lovers, and forgot me, saith the LORD. Therefore, behold, I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfortably unto her (Hosea 2:2-14).”*

The prophet Hosea, like the Lord, called His wife unto repentance. Barring her refusal to repent however, he warns of his right to deliver judgement upon her head. So it was in Judah's case.

The end of verse thirty-eight speaks of the Lord giving blood for His fury and jealousy. The ancient rites of the Israelites called for husbands whose wives had cheated on them to give an offering of jealousy upon the altar. This offer often consisted of the slaying of an animal and the blood of such being spread on the altar. The Book of Numbers records, *“Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, If any man's wife go aside, and commit a trespass against him, And a man lie with her carnally, and it be hid from the eyes of her husband, and be kept close, and she be defiled, and there be no witness against her, neither she be taken with the manner; And the spirit of jealousy come upon him, and he be jealous of his wife, and she be defiled: or if the spirit of jealousy come upon him, and he be jealous of his wife, and she be not defiled: Then shall the man bring his wife unto the priest, and he shall bring her offering for her, the tenth part of an ephah of barley meal; he shall pour no oil upon it, nor put frankincense thereon; for it is an offering of jealousy, an offering of memorial, bringing iniquity to remembrance”* (Numbers 5:12-15). The Lord is again speaking to Israel in a language and manner that they would clearly understand. In order for the Lord's jealousy and fury to be alleviated, an offering must be made. The offering is obviously symbolic of the Savior's sacrifice on our behalf. As we turn unto the Savior He will take away our sins, our guilt, or our jealousy, and our fury. It should be noted however that Judah is missing one key element to this formula. They refused to turn unto the Lord. Mercy cannot be served without this basic principle being fulfilled. In the Doctrine and Covenants the Lord taught Joseph Smith, *“For behold, I God, have suffered these things for all, that they might not suffer if they would repent; but if they would not repent they must suffer even as I; Which suffering caused myself, even God, the greatest of all, to tremble because of pain, and to bleed at every pore, and to suffer both body and spirit – and would that I might not drink the bitter cup, and shrink – Nevertheless, glory be to the Father, and I partook and finished my preparations unto the children of men”* (Doctrine and Covenants 19:16-19).

**Verse 39:** **“And I will also give thee into their hand, and they shall throw down thine eminent place, and shall break down thy high places: they shall strip thee also of thy clothes, and shall take thy fair jewels, and leave thee naked and bare.”**

The next four or five verses are specific prophesy about the destruction of Jerusalem and the Kingdom of Judah by the Lord. The Lord says that He will give Judah into their hands. The Lord is referring to the figurative lovers in our story. In actuality, they represent the great Babylonian Empire. The Lord promises that the Babylonians will throw down Judah's High and Eminent Places. This was fulfilled during the eighteen month siege of Jerusalem which started in the end of 589 BC. It was common for a foreign invading country of that time and culture to make a specific point of destroying all of their enemies' places of religious worship. Destroying their gods and sanctuaries was a sign that their gods were superior. It also removed any hope of the victim that divine intervention could save them.

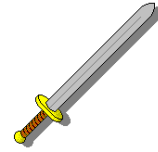
In addition, the Lord foretold that the Babylonians would strip them naked, take away their fair  jewels, and leave them naked and bare. This prophecy was fulfilled in several ways. The Babylonians did strip many of their prisoners naked as a show of humiliation and force. It might also represent the fact that the Babylonians removed all that protected the Israelites. Their great wall was destroyed, their army killed, and their gods broken.

The jewel spoken of by the Lord could also have several meanings. Jewels represent that which is precious and valuable. The Kingdom of Judah had often used their wealth to buy their way out of trouble. This time the Babylonians pillaged all the Judaeen wealth leaving them nothing with which to barter. The other meaning behind the term jewel has to do with the Lord's house. The Temple on Mount Moriah was often referred to as the jewel of Israel. That, at one time, was Israel's true wealth. They had in their possession the house of the true and living God. With that came His blessings and protection. Israel lost that favor when they broke the covenants they had made with Him. The symbol of the jewel was finally removed as the Babylonians destroyed the city of Jerusalem. The Babylonians stripped the temple of all that was of any material worth and then toppled it's walls. So great was the destruction of the Temple that when a group of returning Jews came back some seventy years later they could not even see the original foundation.

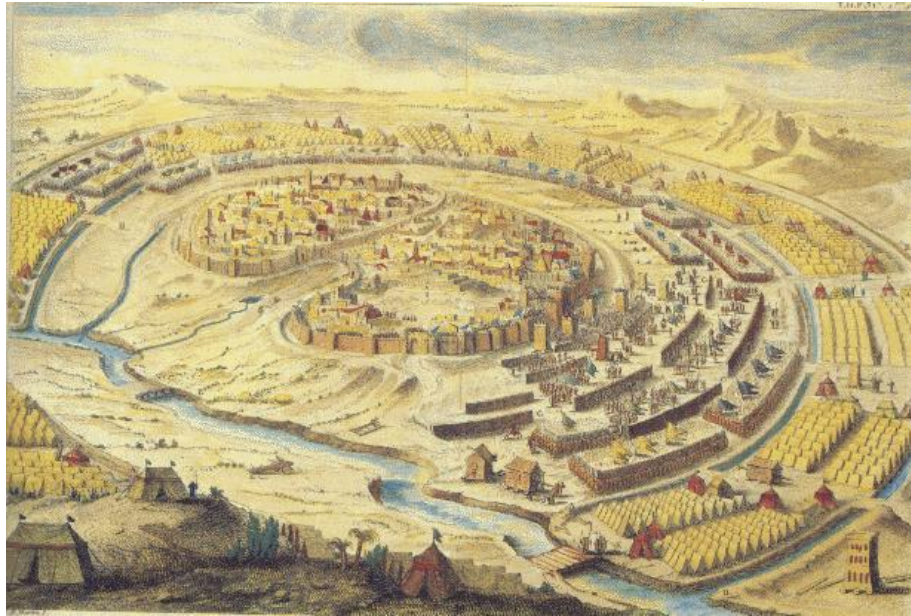
How was Israel left bare and naked? This answer is found in the fact that they were left with nothing. Their city was gone. Their lives were destroyed. All that they owned and valued was taken from them. They were truly left naked and bare.

**Verse 40:** **“They shall also bring up a company against thee, and they shall stone thee with stones, and thrust thee through with their swords.”**

In addition to all of the material and physical losses, the Lord promises to bring up a great company or army against the Hebrews. History records that the Babylonians had one of the largest armies on the earth at that time. And Judah would look out over her walls to see them standing, ready for battle against her. The Lord promises that they would stone the Hebrews and run them through with their swords. Many would die for the sins they committed.



### The Babylonian Siege of Jerusalem which began on December 17, 589 BC and ended on July 17, 587 BC



The phrase *'thrust thee through with their sword'* is an obvious reference to defeat in war. It symbolizes the fact that the Babylonians would kill many Hebrews with weapons of war. This obviously makes sense given the history of the age. However, the phrase *'stone thy with stones'* is somewhat puzzling. What is the act of stoning? To the ancient Hebrews the act of stoning was a common form of punishment for grievous crimes. Stoning occurred for such offenses as capital crimes against the state, people who broke the Law of Moses, adultery, and murder. Obviously Judah had stopped enforcing this punishment in many cases since they were all engaged in them. The actual act of stoning usually took place outside of the city. The convicted person



would sometimes have to dig a hole in the earth deep enough to act as his or her grave. Other times they would stand against the city wall or be tied to a stake. The people who had been harmed by the offender, or representatives of the state, would then take large stones and cast them down upon the convicted until he or she was dead. The stones represented the judgement of God. It is unclear whether the Babylonians actually stoned any Hebrews; however, the symbolism of receiving Gods judgements for their sins was truly fulfilled.

**Verse 41:** **"And they shall burn thine houses with fire, and execute judgements upon thee in the sight of many women: and I will cause thee to cease from playing the harlot, and thou also shalt give no hire any more."**

As Babylonia finally invaded Jerusalem, history records that they burned everything that was of wood and then threw down the walls of stone. The Book of 2<sup>nd</sup> Kings records that the Babylonians "...burnt the house of the Lord, and the kings house, and all the houses of Jerusalem, and every great man's house burnt he with fire" (2<sup>nd</sup> Kings 25:9). The Lord's words were obviously not empty.

Verse forty-one also speaks of judgements being issued upon Judah in the sight of many women. Though it is sure that the women and children of Judah witnessed the death of many a husband and son, the term 'women' is more appropriately used as a symbol representing the cities, and nations surrounding Judah. The Egyptians, Phoenicians, Philistines, and others stood by and watched Judah pay the price for their sins.

The Lord was effectively ending Judah's days as the harlot. She would no longer be able to worship her idols for they were destroyed. They could no longer give the Lord's blessings at the altars of pagan gods, symbolically giving hire, because the altars were gone. The Lord had destroyed Judah's lovers.

**Verse 42-43:** **"So will I make my fury toward thee to rest, and my jealousy shall depart from thee, and I will be quiet, and will be no more angry. Because thou hast not remembered the days of thy youth, but hast fretted me in all these things; behold, therefore I also will recompense thy way upon thine head, saith the Lord GOD: and thou shalt not commit this lewdness above all thine abominations."**

Once the Lord has passed His judgement upon Judah He promises to rest from His fury. We can learn something about the Lord's judgement from this chapter. The Lord is not malicious or

mean. He passes judgement according to our sins, not wishing to punish His children any more that is necessary. In modern day revelation the Lord explains, "*Behold, mine eyes see and know all their works, and I have in reserve a swift judgement in the season thereof, for them all*" (*Doctrine and Covenants 121:24*).

The Lord begins to explain some of His feeling towards Judah. He says that Israel's sins have '*fretted*' Him. The term '*fret*' is defined by the American Heritage Dictionary as follows.

**Fret** v. 1. To cause to be uneasy; vex 2. To gnaw or wear away 3. Irritation of mind; agitation.

The Lord, evidently, could not continue to allow the Israelites sins to go unanswered. Worse yet they had greatly offended Him by forgetting all of the blessings which He had so graciously given them. Has not the Lord said, "*..in nothing doth man offend God, or against none is his wrath kindled, save those who confess not his hand in all things, and obey not his commandments*" (*Doctrine and Covenants 59:21*). Interestingly enough, the Lord refers to this act of not remembering the Lord's hand in their lives as '*lewdness*' or extreme wickedness. Furthermore He declares that He will not allow them to commit this sin in addition to all that they have done.

**Verse 44:** "**Behold, every one that useth proverbs shall use this proverb against thee, saying, As is the mother, so is her daughter.**"

The Near Eastern people were a people who loved proverbs, metaphors, and symbols. Much of our difficulty in understanding works like Ezekiel is due to this fact. The Lord spoke to them in a language they best understood, and they wrote in similar fashion. Given this, it makes sense that the Lord would give a new saying to the Hebrews. Of the Hebrews, the Lord says that the land will begin to say '*As is the mother, so is her daughter*'. This saying is similar to the modern day sayings, '*Like father like son*' or '*The apple doesn't fall far from the tree*'. The word mother might refer to the Kingdom of Samaria, though she would probably be considered Judah's sister. It most probably refers to the heathen nations who symbolically birthed her, the Canaanites. Judah had mimicked the Hittites and Amorites and consequently made the saying, like mother like daughter, true.

**Verse 45:** "Thou art thy mother's daughter, that loatheth her husband and her children; and thou art the sister of thy sisters, which loathed their husbands and their children: your mother was an Hittite, and your father an Amorite."

It is quite apparent with this verse that the Lord is returning to the figurative story that He began in the beginning of this chapter. He again starts to speak of the woman who He had nurtured and cared for. He now declares that she is her mother's daughter. This statement is almost a declaration from the Lord that she is no longer His. The Kingdom of Judah, our symbolic woman, loathed her husband, who is the Lord, and her children, who represent the blessings of their union.

## The Nations Surrounding Judah

Those who were a Symbolic  
Mother, Father, Sisters and Children of Judah



The Lord speaks of Judah's symbolic parents in this verse, the Hittites and Amorites. This topic is discussed in far greater detail in the commentary for verse three of this chapter. Suffice it to say that Hittites and Amorites represented the epitome of wickedness and sin. They were idolatrous and murderous. Even so, the Israelites followed their ways like a child mimics its parents. Symbolically they became the parents of Israel, and in this case more specifically Judah, rather than the Lord God of Heaven who is the rightful parent of Israel.

In our figurative story, the Lord plays the role of husband to the wayward Judah. We find that Judah had sisters. They are discussed further in the next verse. The entire topic of sisters is a new metaphor in our symbolic story and introduces an entirely new topic – justification.

**Verse 46:** **"And thine elder sister is Samaria, she and her daughters that dwell at thy left hand: and thy younger sister, that dwelleth at thy right hand, is Sodom and her daughters."**

The Lord first speaks of Judah's elder sister, Samaria. Samaria was the name often used for the Kingdom of Israel. Though the symbolic story calls Israel and Judah sisters, they could be called sisters in a somewhat literal sense. They were both the offspring of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Even so, was she the elder sister of Judah? The answer to this question is somewhat questionable. The term elder might carry the idea of size. The Kingdom of Israel, which laid north of Judah, was much larger than her southern sister. Moeshe Greenberg wrote, "*Samaria is 'big' in size, not age; younger than Jerusalem, it stands for the northern kingdom, much larger than Judah [for which Jerusalem stands]*" (Ezekiel 1-20, Moeshe Greenberg page 288). Note that the Lord used the right and left hand as symbols for physical direction. The left represents the north while the right represents the south. This assumes the direction giver is facing the rising sun or the east.

Israel was far from the righteous sister who set the perfect example for her siblings. The prophet Jeremiah wrote of Israel and said, "*And I said after she had done all these things, Turn thou unto me. But she returned not. And her treacherous sister Judah saw it. And I saw when for all the causes whereby backsliding Israel committed adultery I had put her away, and given her a bill of divorce; yet her treacherous sister Judah feared not, but went and played the harlot also*" (Jeremiah 3:7-8,10).

The second sister to Judah is referred to as Sodom. This sister is not as easy to relate to Judah. During the time of Ezekiel, Sodom had long since been destroyed. Again Greenberg commented, "*Sodom is 'little' in size, not in age, since it was destroyed before Judah ever existed*" (Ezekiel 1-20, Moeshe Greenberg, pages 288-289). Since she



had not existed in the days of Judah, how could she then be Judah's sister? The answer might lie in what came out of Sodom. We know through the Bible record that Lot and his two daughters escaped from Sodom at the destruction thereof. The Book of Genesis records, *"Thus were both the daughters of Lot with child by their father. And the firstborn bare a son, and called his name Moab: the same is the father of the Moabites unto this day. And the younger, she also bare a son, and called his name Benammi: the same is the father of the children of Ammon unto this day"* (Genesis 19:36-38). The verse, when examined closely, adds the phrase 'she and her daughters', meaning those that live in the area. Basically, we are speaking of the land of Sodom and those in close proximity. The same would be true for the Kingdom of Israel.



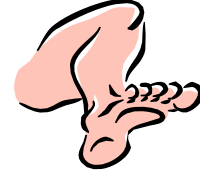
**Lot and his Family  
Leaving Sodom**

## **The Present Day Appearance of the Land of Sodom**



**Verse 47:** "Yet hast thou not walked after their ways, nor done after their abominations: but, as if that were a very little thing, thou wast corrupted more than they in all thy ways."

The Lord begins this verse by speaking of Judah not walking after the ways of Samaria and Sodom. The term 'walked' is used symbolically to represent the attitudes, desires, and actions of someone or a group of people. It is associated with the symbolic usage of the feet, which represent that which someone or something stands for. The feet represent ones foundation or the principles that every action and desire is based on. Almost unexpectedly, the Lord claims that Judah had **not** followed Samaria and Sodom's direction. We know that Judah had become very sinful. They had partaken of every sin imaginable. Samaria had done very similarly. They too were full of iniquity. Sodom, well, their very name has come to be an icon of sin. The Lord even compared Judah to Sodom when, through the Prophet Jeremiah, He said, "*I have seen also the prophets of Jerusalem an horrible thing; they commit adultery, and walk in lies; they strengthen also the hands of evil doers, that none doth return from his wickedness: They are all of them unto me as Sodom, and the inhabitants thereof as Gomorrah*" (Jeremiah 23:14). If Judah was as wicked as Samaria and Sodom, why does the Lord say that she did not walk in their ways. Moeshe Greenberg suggests that the translation should be worded as more of a rhetorical question, "Did you not walk in the ways of Samaria and Sodom?" If Greenberg is correct, which he probably is, the verse begins to make a little more sense.



The Lord continues by adding that if it were not bad enough for Judah to follow after the sins of Samaria and Sodom, they proceeded to surpass even them in the sins that they committed. Again, this might seem implausible if not impossible. What sins could Judah have committed that Sodom and Samaria hadn't? If one were to review the kings of Israel and Judah one might even conclude that Israel was even more wicked than Judah, though it would appear that this is not the case. The answer to this question might not be a matter of the type of sin or even the degree to which it was committed. It might very well be the amount of accountability that they each had. One should remember that Judah was given a great many advantages by the Lord. In the Old Testament, only one book is a record of an Israelite Prophet called to preach unto the Kingdom of Israel. The large majority of the prophets called to Judah and Israel were of Judaeen nationality. In fact, Judah was blessed with more prophets leading and guiding them than probably Sodom and Samaria combined. Judah also was blessed with the Lord's Temple. They were able to go there and receive direction and guidance from on High. Neither Sodom nor Samaria was blessed with such a gift.

# the kings of israel

King Saul

King David

King Solomon (Jedediah)

## the kingdom of judah

## the kingdom of israel

Date	King's Name	Disposition	Disposition	King's Name	Date
930-913 BC	Rehoboam	Wicked	Wicked	Jeroboam I	930-909 BC
913-910 BC	Abijam	Wicked			
910-869 BC	Asa	Righteous			
			Wicked	Nadab	909-908 BC
			Wicked	Baasha	908-886 BC
			Wicked	Elah	886-885 BC
			Wicked	Zimri	885 BC
			Wicked	Tibni	885-880 BC
			Wicked	Omri	885-874 BC
			Wicked	Zhab	874-853 BC
872-848 BC	Jehoshaphat	Righteous			
853-841 BC	Jehoram	Wicked	Wicked	Ahaziah	853-852 BC
			Wicked	Jehoram	852-841 BC
841 BC	Ahaziah	Wicked	Righteous	Jehu	841-814 BC
841-835 BC	Athaliah (Queen)	Wicked			
835-796 BC	Joash	Wicked			
			Wicked	Jehoahaz	814-798 BC
796-767 BC	Azariah	Wicked	Wicked	Jehoash	798-782 BC
792-740 BC	Uzziah	Wicked	Wicked	Jeroboam II	793-753 BC
			Wicked	Zachariah	753 BC
			Wicked	Shallum	751 BC
			Wicked	Menahem	752-742 BC
			Wicked	Pekahiah	742-740 BC
			Wicked	Pekah	752-740 BC
750-732 BC	Jotham	Righteous			
735-715 BC	Ahaz	Wicked	Wicked	Hoshea	732-722 BC
715-686 BC	Ezekiah	Righteous			
				Israel falls to Assyria	721 BC
697-642 BC	Manasseh	Wicked			
642-640 BC	Amon	Wicked			
640-609 BC	Josiah	Righteous			
609 BC	Jehoahaz	Wicked			
609-598 BC	Jehoiakim	Wicked			
598-597 BC	Jehoiachin	-----			
598-587 BC	Zedekiah	Wicked			
587 BC	Judah fall to Babylonia				

The true answer to our dilemma is answered with the following passage of scripture. The Lord revealed to Joseph Smith, "*For of him unto whom much is given much is required; and he who sins against the greater light shall receive the greater condemnation*" (Doctrine and Covenants 82:3).

**Verse 48:** **"As I live, saith the Lord GOD, Sodom thy sister hath not done, she nor her daughters, as thou hast done, thou and thy daughters."**

The Lord starts this verse with a conditional statement that is surer than any statement one can make. He says, "As I live". Since He is eternal and endless (Doctrine and Covenants 19:10-13). The fact that he lives is a conditional statement that has, does, and will always exist and will always be true. Knowing that the conditional portion of the statement is met beyond reason, the effect portion of the statement is guaranteed to happen. The result of the condition that is met is outlined in the remainder of this chapter.

As the Savior sent His apostles into the world, he spoke of those cities that might not accept them. Of those cities he said, "*...It shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgement than for that city*" (Matthew 10:15, see also Matthew 11:24). How could the Lord make such a statement? Well, think of the opportunity that would be available if an apostle of the Lord knocked on your door and invited you unto Christ, versus the opportunity many of the inhabitants of Sodom had. The same was true of Judah. Neither Sodom nor Samaria was given the same great opportunity that Judah had, and yet Judah rejected it.

**Verse 49:** **"Behold, this was the iniquity of thy sister Sodom, pride, fulness of bread, and abundance of idleness was in her and in her daughters, neither did she strengthen the hand of the poor and needy."**

The term Sodom is a symbol for wickedness. In fact, when most people hear the words Sodom and Gomorrah they think of the epitome of all sin and the worst degree of unwhollyness. The Lord Himself said, "*...the men of Sodom were wicked and sinners before the Lord exceedingly*" (Genesis 13:13). What was their sin specifically? Most would answer this question with things like homosexuality, gross sexual sins, the love of money, and the disrespect for God's laws. Though all of these answers are undoubtedly true, this verse in chapter sixteen of Ezekiel specifies the main contributing sin of the inhabitants of Sodom. That sin was 'pride'.

According to the Lord, who by the way is our best source of information, Sodom was prideful, full of bread, full of idleness, and uncaring for those that were poor and needy. It is sad to say that these sins sound a lot like life in our own society.

In fact, this verse leads one to wonder how different our modern day societies really are from that of ancient Sodom. To better understand this verse, it is necessary to look at each of these sins individually.



The first sin mentioned was *'pride'*. Pride is considered one of the greatest tools of the adversary. Ezra Taft Benson said, *"In the scriptures there is no such thing as righteous pride. It is always considered as a sin. We are not speaking of a wholesome view of self worth which is established by a close relationship with God. But we are speaking of pride as the universal sin, as someone has described it...Essentially, pride is a 'my will' rather than 'thy will' approach to life. The opposite of pride is humbleness, meekness, submissiveness, or teachableness...Pride does not look up to God and care about what is right. It looks sideways to man and argues who is right...Pride is self-willed as opposed to God's will. It is the fear of man over the fear of God. Humility responds to God's will – to fear of His judgements and needs of those around us. To the proud, the applause of the world rings in their ears; to the humble, the applause of heaven warms the heart"* (*We Believe – Doctrines and Principles of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, Rulon T. Burton, page 977*). It was this very sin that Sodom embraced and consequently led to their fall.

The second stumbling block of Sodom was that of being full of bread. The term bread typically represents food and the substance of life. In this case, the word is used to symbolize the overall wealth of Sodom. They were full of bread; in other words, they were blessed with abundance according to the standards of the world. One might ask what was wrong with such abundance. Abundance by itself is not wrong, what is often wrong with the picture is the sacrifices made to get it. President Wilford Woodruff said, *"I do not find fault with a man getting rich, I find fault with our selling the kingdom of God, our birthright, selling the Gospel and depriving ourselves of eternal life, for the sake of gratifying the lusts of the flesh, the pride of life and the fashions of the world; and setting our hearts upon these things"* (*We Believe – Doctrines and Principles of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, Rulon T. Burton, page 1086*). It is implied that Sodom acquired great wealth through the sacrifice of eternal riches.

The third problem that Sodom had was idleness. The Lord's people have always been an industrious people. Since the fall of Adam, man has been commanded to work. Many look upon this

commandment as a curse rather than direction from God. Those who have idle hands are denying themselves the blessings that come through work. Sodom was evidently full of lazy people who avoided work.

The final sin mentioned in this verse that was committed by the people of Sodom was the lack of caring for the poor and needy. If the life of the Savior taught us anything, it had to be an example of caring for the poor and needy. The Savior was constantly enlisted in their service. In fact this very topic is discussed more than most other gospel subjects in the scriptures. The Prophet Joseph Smith taught, "Therefore, if any man shall take of the abundance which I have made, and impart not his portion, according to the law of my gospel, unto the poor and the needy, he shall, with the wicked, lift up his eyes in hell, being in torment" (*We Believe – Doctrines and Principles of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, Rulon T. Burton, page 1100*).

## Jesus Christ Caring for the Sick & Afflicted



Obviously, this verse of scripture does not list all of the sins of Sodom, but isn't it interesting that the Lord chose to mention these four when listing their sins? There were evidently many to choose from. We might take heed to the fact that these four were chosen and ask ourselves if we are guilty of the same sins.

**Verse 50:** "And they were haughty, and committed abomination before me: therefore I took them away as I saw good."

The Sodomites were haughty, a synonym for prideful. Like most people, pride often proceeds the sin. Whether or not this was the entire case with Sodom or not might be debatable, but one thing is sure – the Sodomites committed all manner of sin before the Lord. Because of their sins the Lord explains that He took them away as He saw good.

The phrase "*as I saw good*" could better be translated from the Hebrew as "*when I saw it*". In other words, when the Lord saw their fallen condition He removed them from their mortal probation. So severe was their fate that very few things on earth



### The Destruction of Sodom

have been able to live in the area where they once live several millennia ago. Their destruction came with fire and brimstone falling from the sky effectively destroying everything with which it came in contact. Below is a picture of the Dead Sea at or around the suspected area which Sodom might have inhabited so long ago.

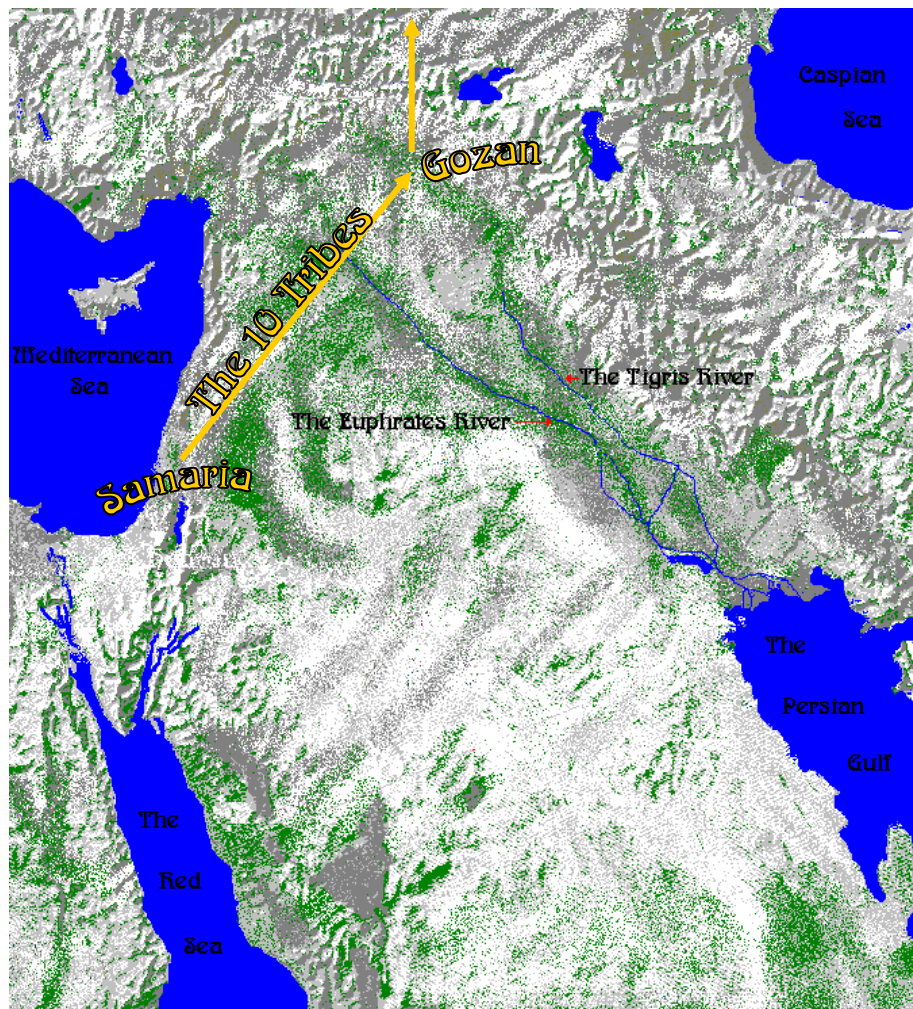
### Life at the Dead Sea



**Verse 51:** "Neither hath Samaria committed half of thy sins; but thou hast multiplied thine abominations more than they, and hast justified thy sisters in all thine abominations which thou hast done."

By now we should have a good understanding of Sodom's sins and their fate. With this understanding set forth, the Lord now turns His dialog towards Samaria. The Lord spends little time expounding on Israel's sin and its fate. Israel had committed many, if not all, of the sins that Judah had committed to one degree or another. The Lord finally answered their sins by destroying their nation, their homes, and many of their lives at the hands of the Assyrians at or around 721 BC. The Bible records, "In the ninth year of Hoshea the king of Assyria took Samaria, and carried Israel away into Assyria, and placed them in Halah and in Habor by the river of Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes" (2<sup>nd</sup> Kings 17:6).

## The Path of the Ten Tribes





They remained in Assyrian captivity for over one hundred years until the fall of the Assyrians to the newly arising Babylonian Empire. The captive Israelites, who represented ten of the twelve tribes of Israel, fled Assyria and headed north. From that point on, we have not heard nor hair of them. They have since become known as the ten lost tribes of Israel.

Because of the fact that Judah had surpassed Sodom and Samaria in her sinfulness the Lord states that Judah has justified her sisters. This whole topic of justification is a difficult and sometimes dangerous topic. The dictionary defines the term **'justification'** as something, such as a circumstance, that frees one from the guilt and penalty attached to grievous sins. We often try to justify our sins in our own minds, reasoning that for one reason or another we are not responsible for our actions. Harold B. Lee said, "*Justification means to pronounce free from guilt or blame, or to absolve*" (*We Believe – Doctrines and Principles of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, Rulon T. Burton, page 486*). Unfortunately, we do not make this decision. The Lord decides what is justified and what isn't. Bruce R. McConkie wrote, "*To be justified is to be made righteous and therefore to be saved. Men are justified in what they do when their deeds conform to divine standards. Righteous acts are ratified by the Holy Ghost...The wicked, of course, are not justified*" (*The Promised Messiah, Bruce R. McConkie, page 344-345*). The difficulty with the end of Ezekiel Chapter sixteen, and the topic of justification is quite evident in Elder McConkie's quotation. Ezekiel records that the sins of Sodom and Samaria, which were indeed grave, were justified in the sins committed by Judah. Elder McConkie points out that justification can only occur through righteous acts, and that the wicked will not be justified, yet Sodom and Samaria have done nothing to entitle them to justification. It would make sense if Ezekiel had said something similar to his counterpart Jeremiah when he said, "*The backsliding Israel hath justified herself more than treacherous Judah*" (*Jeremiah 3:11*). However, Ezekiel basically says that Judah justified Samaria and Sodom through her sins. Taking the verse as written can cause great frustration in that it is contrary to the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The answer to this frustration lies in the translation of the verse from the Hebrew. For some reason the translators chose to use the word justification when the end of the verse should probably read, '*but thou hast multiplied thine abominations more than they, and hast **made** thy sisters **look righteous** by all thine abominations which thou hast done.*' This changes the meaning of the verse. Basically, Samaria and Sodom, though very wicked, appeared almost righteous when compared to Judah's sinfulness.

**Verse 52:** "Thou also, which hast judged thy sisters, bear thine own shame for thy sins that thou hast committed more abominable than they: they are more righteous than thou: yea, be thou confounded also, and bear thy shame, in that thou hast justified thy sisters."

As amazing as it may sound, wicked Judah had apparently passed judgement on Samaria and Sodom. They had in some way condemned them for their actions not seeing their own transgressions. Unfortunately, this is not an error isolated among the Kingdom of Judah. All too often we sit and judge others not seeing the errors of our own ways. We would that others suffer the pain, grief and shame associated with sin, but heaven forbid that we must endure the same. It is all too difficult for many of us to offer mercy to our brother, yet we almost demand it on our behalf. Judah apparently took this attitude with their neighbors. They felt that they were God's chosen people. They had His temple in their midst, and they had the Holy City of David. Surely, the Lord could see no wrong in them. This verse clears up this misunderstanding. The Lord says plainly, you have made your sister look righteous by your actions. You shall be confounded in your words and will bear the shame of your iniquity.

**Verse 53:** "When I shall bring again their captivity, the captivity of Sodom and her daughters, and the captivity of Samaria and her daughters, then will I bring again the captivity of thy captives in the midst of them:"

Before discussing this verse one translation error needs to be noted which greatly affects the meaning of the verse. The term '*bring again*' should have been translated as '*restore*'. In addition, the word '*captivity*' is more appropriately '*inheritance*'. Finally, one should remember that daughters and women are used symbolically to refer to cities, nations, and peoples. Daughter refers more specifically to those that are descendant or break-offs from the sisters. One might re-write this verse as follows.

**"When I shall restore Sodom and Samaria's inheritance, the inheritance of Sodom and her descendant nations, and the inheritance of Samaria and her descendant nations, then will I restore the inheritance of thy captives in the midst of Sodom and Samaria:"**

The re-written verse makes it apparent that the Lord is speaking of the doctrine of restoration. More specifically, the Lord is speaking of the restoration of the twelve tribes and the restoration of all that is holy and pure in the latter days.

Remember, the city of Sodom is commonly used as a symbol for the heathen nations of the world. The literal people of Sodom were descendants of Ham through the lineage of Ham's son, Canaan. They were indeed Canaanites. They were a race of people who were denied the priesthood and the blessings thereof because of the sins of their fathers. The Sodomites initially settled in a lush delta located at the north end of the Dead Sea. At the time of their settlement, the area was far different than it is now. The sea was far from dead. Today the Dead Sea is approximately 25% salt and stands as the lowest spot on all the continents. It is nearly void of life. The conditions of ancient Sodom were ones of prosperity. Some have theorized that the area was comparable to the Garden of Eden, though we know that it could not have been that fertile and lush since the whole earth had been smitten with a curse after Adam's fall. Even so, the point is that the land of Sodom was full of life and blessings. It was for this reason that Abraham's nephew, Lot, decided to live in the land of Sodom. By the time of Abraham and Lot, the Land of Sodom had sunken deep into sin. They had delved into every imaginable sin and committed just about every act of iniquity. For some reason Lot choose to ignore their wickedness in exchange for the richness of the land. It was shortly after Lot made this decision that the Lord destroyed the city of Sodom and all of her sister cities.

This particular passage in Ezekiel refers to Sodom and her daughters. The scriptures sometimes refer to smaller cities of similar cultural background that are in close proximity to a larger city as daughters of the larger city. The term 'daughter' is also used symbolically to represent groups or classes of people who come from the same descendants. For example, the Amorites and Hittites might be considered sisters since they are both Canaanites. What Ezekiel has recorded is somewhat obscure. One theory might lie in the fact that Sodom was in close proximately to several smaller cities, one of which was the renowned Gomorrah. These cities, and the surrounding area, were destroyed; however, the Lord is promising that the curse will one day be lifted and the land restored. The cites in close proximity to Sodom were known as Gomorrah, Admah, Zeboim, Bela, and Zoar. Further south along the east side of the Dead Sea were the cities of Numeria, Safi, and Bad-edh-Dhra. Hereafter is a satellite picture showing the remains of ancient cities under the current water level of the Dead Sea. It is theorized that Sodom is location B; however, there is no firm evidence that identifies the sites shown.



**A Satellite Picture of Ancient Cities under  
the present Water Level in the Dead Sea**

**(#B is thought to be ancient Sodom)**

If the Lord, through Ezekiel's writing, is foretelling the day of the restoration of all things, this prophecy might have been partially fulfilled in a General Conference of the church in 1977 when the Prophet, Spencer W. Kimball restored the privilege of holding the priesthood to any worthy male. After literally thousands of years, the descendants of Canaan (including the Sodomites) were to be allowed to hold the priesthood of God. Their spiritual inheritance was being restored.

In addition to the spiritual restoration, the Land of Sodom, we are told, will be restored. In the last days, water will flow from the Temple in Jerusalem into the Dead Sea and heal the lifeless body of water. We are told that the Jordan Valley will blossom life as it once did prior to the destruction of Sodom. Taking this prophecy one step further, we know that the blessings of the Lord will go forth throughout the world. The wicked will be destroyed and the earth will be healed of her corrupted, and spiritually dead state.

The passage in Ezekiel goes on to speak of Judah's other sister, Samaria. Samaria, like Sodom, was destroyed for her wickedness. As discussed in the commentary for previous verses, Samaria (also known as the Kingdom of Israel or the Northern Kingdom) rejected the word of God until the Assyrians were finally sent to utterly destroy their kingdom and take their citizens captive. Samaria, or Israel, ceased to exist from that point on. Even to this day, we do not know exactly where the ten tribes of Israel are or what exactly happened to them. Ezekiel records that eventually the Lord will restore Israel and give her the inheritance which He had promised her forefathers. This prophecy is reiterated from several Prophets both in ancient texts and through modern day revelation.

Based on Ezekiel's record, Judah will not be fully restored until the Lord has restored both Samaria and Sodom. Looking at modern history books, we can see that the Lord has begun the great work of gathering Israel home. In May of 1946 the kingdom of Israel was created in the Middle East and the Jews from around the world began the process of gathering home. Even with the established state and the vast amount of Jews that are once again home, the kingdom is far from restored. There is much that must be done prior to the Lord's work being complete.

**Verse 54:** **"That thou mayest bear thine own shame, and mayest be confounded in all that thou hast done, in that thou art a comfort unto them."**

Apparently, the Jews were to understand that they would have to patiently wait as the Lord restored Sodom and Samaria prior to their own restoration before the Lord. This waiting has been very evident as one looks at the history of the Jews. They have scattered, abused, and neglected for centuries. For hundreds of years they had no place to call home, nor a land that they could call their own. What was the Lord's purpose with this? According to this verse in Ezekiel, the Jews were to undergo these trials so that they might bear their own shame, and be confounded in what they had done. They term confounded might better be translated as humbled or brought into a repentant state. In so doing the Jews are to become a comfort to her sisters, Sodom and Samaria.

**Verse 55:** "When thy sisters, Sodom and her daughters, shall return to their former estate, and Samaria and her daughters shall return to their former estate, then thou and thy daughters shall return to your former estate."

An estate is a sum of property or possessions. Notice that all three sisters in our symbolic story have lost their estates. They lost all that the Lord had blessed them with, both physically and spiritually. Even so, the merciful God of Heaven has seen fit to restore His great gifts to the future generations of Sodom, Samaria, and Judah. All that they once were shall be restored. Like another prophecy reads, "The first shall be last and the last shall be first." Judah will discover that the restoration of the gospel will find its way to it's heart only after the gentiles and all the other nations of the earth.

**Verse 56:** "For thy sister Sodom was not mentioned by thy mouth in the day of thy pride."

Like most men, Judah did not mention the wickedness of the world in the day of her sin. To judge the world would have been the same as condemning herself. Ezekiel used a symbolic phrase in this verse, which might be helpful to define in order to understand his message. The prophet says that Sodom was not mentioned by "*thy mouth*" in the day of thy pride. The mouth is used to represent speech, verbal judgement, and the expression of one's self. It would appear that Israel was in some sort of denial. They refused to admit in any way that they were involved in the same acts as their symbolic sister, Sodom. Part of this denial was the removal of any discussion that might condemn them or at least recognize their sins. Apparently Israel was adopting the old adage; '*ignorance is bliss*'. Unfortunately, the Lord upholds an eternal law, which reads, "*It is impossible for a man to be saved through ignorance*" (*Doctrine and Covenants 131:6*).



**Verse 57:** "Before thy wickedness was discovered, as at the time of thy reproach of the daughters of Syria, and all that are round about her, the daughters of the Philistines, which despise thee round about."

The prophet Ezekiel starts this verse by speaking of a time prior to the discovery of Judah's wickedness. Looking back on Judah's history one might find it difficult to isolate a time prior to her wickedness; however, the Lord is probably conveying to us, through Ezekiel, the time in Judah's history in which they had not fully turned from the Lord. It was during this time that they had reproach for Syria. It should be mentioned that the country of Syria is the Hebrew country of Aram, or the area originally occupied by Abraham's family. The land of Aram was originally inhabited by the Aramaeans, who were direct descendants of Shem. Shem is said to have had a son named Aram who settled this area. This might explain why Abram was led to Aram after his exodus from Ur. After all, Abram was a Shemite and Aramaeans would have been family.

### The Holy Land Viewed from the North



By the time the Judaeans had become an accepted and established country, the bonds of family must have weakened. Apparently, they had reproach, or a strong disgust or loathing, for the lifestyle of the Aramaeans and the rest of their neighbors. The lands surrounding them had totally turned themselves against the God of Israel, while the Judaeans, who were far from perfect, still had a base belief in the God of Abraham. Even more so, the Judaeans had a proud heritage claiming

to be descendants of Abraham supposedly entitling them to great blessings and favoritism. They had come to have an attitude that despite their actions they were better than the heathen nations at their boards for the simple fact that their genealogy lead back to Abraham.

One might sometimes wonder how many members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints believe that their eternal fate is going to be better than that of their non-member friends due to the simple fact that they have accepted the covenants associated with the gospel. To those that believe this way awaits a rude awakening. God is equal and just. All mankind will be judged accordingly. In fact, we members of the church should frequently remind ourselves that where much is given much is required (Doctrine & Covenants 82:3).

**Verse 58-59: "Thou hast borne thy lewdness and thine abominations, saith the LORD. For thus saith the Lord GOD; I will even deal with thee as thou hast done, which hast despised the oath in breaking the covenant."**

The term borne carries the idea of origination, ownership, and creation. Alternately, it could mean to bear up or to sustain. Here it is said that Judah had borne her lewdness and abominations. Whatever the true meaning of the word borne is, it is clear that Judah was squarely accountable and responsible for her sins. Despite the wickedness of her neighbors, Judah could not shift the blame to their wickedness.

Judah, unlike her neighbors, bore a greater responsibility for her actions. Not only was Judah given greater knowledge and wisdom between right and wrong, but she had made certain promises with the Lord. The Hebrews had partaken of the same covenant which Father Abraham had with the Lord. It was this covenant that blessed them with the priesthood, the temple, and everything associated therewith. Modern day revelation to the Prophet Joseph Smith explains the seriousness of the covenant associated with bearing God here on earth. It reads, *"And this is according to the oath and covenant which belongeth to the priesthood. Therefore, all those who receive the priesthood, receive this oath and covenant of my Father, which he cannot break, neither can it be moved. But whoso breaketh this covenant after he hath received it, and altogether turneth therefrom, shall not have forgiveness of his sins in this world nor in the world to come...And the Father teacheth him of the covenant which he has renewed and confirmed upon you for your sakes, and not for your sakes only, but for the sake of the whole world. And the whole world lieth in sin, and groaneth under darkness and under the bondage of sin..."* (Doctrine and Covenants 84:39-49). How applicable this passage is to



ancient Judah. Consequently, the Lord promises that he would deal with them as they have done. The Lord exclaims that the Hebrews not only broke the covenant that they had made with the Lord, but they despised it. The logic behind this statement is simple. The covenant brought such great blessings to those that honored it; turning away from it would indicate an extreme hate for the covenant itself. Another reason for Judah despising the covenant is probably resentment towards the Lord for what they lost. Once they broke their end of the covenant, the Lord was no longer obligated to keep His end of the covenant. The scriptures record, "I, the Lord, am bound when ye do what I say; but when ye do not what I say, ye have no promise" (*Doctrine and Covenants 82:10*). How often do we see this same response in our day? Quite often when man breaks a covenant with the Lord and loses the Lord's blessings, he will blame the Lord and act as if the Lord has transgressed the Law. Unfortunately, we haven't learned any more about responsibility than ancient Judah.

**Verse 60:** **"Nevertheless I will remember my covenant with thee in the days of thy youth, and I will establish unto thee an everlasting covenant."**

Before discussing the contents of this verse, it is prudent to discuss in greater detail the great covenants of the Lord, more specifically the everlasting covenant. The whole idea of covenants and promises in association with the gospel might arouse some questions. Why does the Lord require covenants? How come they are so significant to our relationship with him? One author explains, "*In order to help his children become like him, their Father in Heaven admonishes them to observe certain gospel principles by means of covenants and ordinances. The entire gospel itself is referred to in scripture as 'a new and an everlasting covenant' (Old Testament Student Manual: Genesis – 2<sup>nd</sup> Samuel, page 61).*" The whole concept of a covenant carries the idea of commitment from both parties. "*A covenant is a mutual agreement between two or more persons whereby each contracting party agrees to abide by certain stipulations...Broken covenants have no eternal, or lasting, value. As Joseph Smith said, 'It requires two parties to make a covenant, and those two parties must agree, or no covenant can be made [Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith, compiled by Joseph F. Smith, page 14] (Old Testament Student Manual : Genesis – 2<sup>nd</sup> Samuel, page 61)].'*"

If the entire gospel is considered the new and everlasting covenant, then what is the new and everlasting covenant of marriage, and why do they bear the same name? Speaking of the new and everlasting covenant of marriage the Lord told the Prophet Joseph Smith, "*I reveal unto you a new and everlasting covenant; and if ye*

*abide not that covenant, then are ye damned; for no one can reject this covenant and be permitted to enter into my glory. For all who will have a blessing at my hands shall abide the law which was appointed for the blessing, and the conditions thereof, as were instituted from before the foundation of the world...Abraham received all things...and hath entered into his exaltation and sitteth upon his throne. Abraham received promises concerning his seed, and of the fruit of his loins – from whose loins ye are...This promise is yours also, because ye are of Abraham, and the promise was made unto Abraham; and by this law is the continuation of the works of my Father, wherein he glorifieth himself...But if ye enter not into my law ye cannot receive the promise of my Father, which he made unto Abraham” (Doctrine and Covenants 132:4-5,29-33).* It is clear that the new and everlasting covenant of marriage is the capstone of the gospel. It is the fullness of all of the gospel covenants and represents all that the Lord has to offer. It is through this covenant that Abraham received all of the great blessings he received at the hands of the Lord.

# The Abrahamic Covenant

Promised Blessings	Earthly Events	Eternal Results
<b>A "Promised Land" to live in</b> (Abraham 2:6,19; Genesis 12:7; 17:8)	<b>Abraham is driven/lead from several lands</b>	<b>The Celestial Kingdom</b> (D&C 88:17-20)
<b>A Great Posterity</b> (Abraham 2:9-10; Genesis 12:2-3; 17:2,4-6)	<b>Abraham's wife was initially barren</b>	<b>Eternal Marriage and Eternal Increase</b> (D&C 132:19-22)
<b>The Gospel and the Priesthood for Abraham and his Posterity</b> (Abraham 2:9-11, Genesis 17:7)	<b>His life was full of trials &amp; on several occasions his life was threatened</b>	<b>Exaltation &amp; Eternal Life</b> (D&C 132:23-24)

It is for this reason that the new and everlasting covenant and the new and everlasting covenant of marriage are used synonymously. Speaking of the New and Everlasting Covenant, Brigham Young said, *"It is without beginning of days or end of years...We can tell some things with regard to it; it lays the foundation for worlds, for angels, and for the Gods; for intelligent beings to be crowned with glory, immortality, and eternal lives. In fact, it is the thread which runs from the beginning to the end of the holy Gospel of Salvation – of the Gospel of the Son of God; it is from eternity to eternity"* (*Teachings of Presidents of the Church – Brigham Young, page 163*). It is clear that the covenants associated with the gospel are not only important to us becoming like our Father in Heaven but it is crucial in obtaining all that He has. It was also the means by which the world was created and by which all salvation is obtained. It would seem that the same covenants existed in our pre-earth life. We entered into covenants with Father as we chose to follow Him and successfully complete our first estate. It is by covenant that we bind ourselves to Him and obtain exaltation with Him.

The new and everlasting covenant is also referred to as the Abrahamic covenant. It was this covenant the great prophet Abraham made with the Lord in order to obtain all of His blessings. With that covenant, Abraham received a promise from the Lord that his posterity would receive the blessings of the Lord. This of course was dependent on Abraham's faithfulness. Since Abraham was faithful to his covenants, the Lord is bound to His promise. The problem with this chapter is that Abraham was faithful to his covenant, but his posterity was not. His posterity, during Ezekiel's era and prior, had broken the covenant and had no right to the Lord's blessing. Even so, how could the Lord deny them His blessings when Abraham had fulfilled the requirements of his covenants? This verse reassures Judah of the Lord's commitment to Abraham, and burst the bubble that most Judaeans of the time held thinking that because of Abraham's faithfulness they were guaranteed the Lord's blessings regardless of their actions. The Lord promises that when the children of Abraham remember Him and again commit to follow Him in righteousness, He will remember the promises made to Abraham and again establish the gospel covenants with them.

**Verse 61:** **"Then thou shalt remember thy ways, and be ashamed, when thou shalt receive thy sisters, thine elder and thy younger: and I will give them unto thee for daughters, but not by thy covenant."**

In the day that Abraham's children shall be offered the new and everlasting covenant again, the Lord says that they shall not only remember the wickedness that they had committed, but they shall be ashamed of what they have done. In short, they will be repentant. The first two steps to repentance are first the acknowledgement that you have done wrong, and the second is feeling godly remorse for what you have done. What does the word ashamed mean and why is it significant that Israel was to be ashamed? In this application of the word it most probably means remorse. In addition, Abraham's children will no longer reject and judge the nations of the world. She will act as a symbolic sister to Sodom and Samaria, the world and the Lord's other children. Interestingly enough, this act is not part of the new and everlasting covenant. Even so, it should be remembered that the Lord said of His people, "*Ye shall know them by their fruits*" (Matthew 7:16).

**Verse 62-63:** "And I will establish my covenant with thee; and thou shalt know that I am the LORD: That thou mayest remember, and be confounded, and never open thy mouth any more because of thy shame, when I am pacified toward thee for all that thou hast done, saith the Lord GOD."

As the children of Abraham begin the repentance process they will acknowledge their sins, show remorse and shame for them, and bring forth the fruits of a repentant heart. At this point, the Lord will again allow them to further the process by entering into a covenant with him. By this covenant they are again under obligation to follow the Lord's laws. Paul taught the Romans, "*Now we know that what things soever the law saith to them that are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God*" (Romans 3:19). Similarly, Ezekiel records that the covenant of the Lord will cause them to acknowledge that He is the Lord, and with that knowledge they will be confounded as He forgives them of their sins.

In a chapter of incredible indignation directed towards the Lord's people, He ends with a message of great hope and direction. He outlines the first steps of repentance, and gives a promise of forgiveness if they/we will but follow His laws and be willing to accept His laws.



**Chapter  
Summary:**

The prophet Ezekiel is told to carry a message from the Lord to His children in exile as well as those in Jerusalem. In true form to the rest of Ezekiel's doctrinal instructions, the prophet is directed to deliver the message in the form of a symbolic story. The crux of the message Ezekiel was told to deliver was to cause the children of Abraham to know the sins that they have committed against God and cause them to repent. The first part of this chapter is clear and direct; however, the prophet soon starts on His figurative story. The Lord, through Ezekiel, relates a story of an infant who is born to a father and mother in the land of Canaan. The infant we understand is the early beginnings of the Hebrew Nation. The parents of this child are figurative for the surrounding heathen nations. These parents are less than caring for God's children and neglect the infant nation. Despite the need of this poor infant all of those that passed by and saw her had no pity. As is common in the world, the need for God cannot be replaced by any other nation, people, organization, or entity. Fortunately for the Hebrews, the Lord passed by and saw the symbolically neglected child. Having pity on the infant He cared for her and saw that her needs were met. She grew into a beautiful woman, and eventually became the Lord's wife. This symbol is a little more common in scripture. The church or the Lord's people are often referred to as the Lord's bride. As His wife, her beauty grew even more, indicating the blessings associated with being counted among the Lord's people. Furthermore, she was blessed with all that the Lord had, and her reputation went out among many foreign lands. Despite such rich luxurious conditions she broke her marriage covenants and committed all manner of whoredoms. This represents the fact that they had broken all the covenants that they had made with the Lord. Because of her actions, the Lord promises to bring great wrath upon her.

Shifting the story slightly, the prophet begins to speak of the figurative girl's sisters. Apparently, the girl in question had several sisters who also committed whoredoms. The sisters are represented as Sodom and Samaria. Both are known in history for the sins, which they committed. Despite the sins of her sisters, her sins were considered greater than theirs because of all that she had been given by the Lord. She would find no justification in the sins of her sisters. The chapter ends with a promise that the Lord will eventually remember the covenants that they made together.



