



EZEKIEL

Read Ezekiel 1

Ezekiel is a very enigmatic book because it has several literary forms: allegories, visions, signs, and proverbs. The call of Ezekiel took place while he was in exile in Babylon. Ezekiel was both a priest and a prophet, two professions frequently opposed to each other. His message is sharply divided between words of judgment in the early chapters and words of consolation after the destruction of Jerusalem. Much of chapter 1 is in the form of a theophany, a vision of a throne chariot.

Reflect: Reflect upon the presence of God in our own lives.

Pray: Pray that we may be constantly aware of God's presence among us.

Act: Try to see God's presence in each of us.

The Vision of the Chariot

1 In the thirtieth year, in the fourth month, on the fifth day of the month, as I was among the exiles by the river Chebar, the heavens were opened, and I saw visions of God. ² On the fifth day of the month (it was the fifth year of the exile of King Jehoiachin), ³ the word of the LORD came to the priest Ezekiel son of Buzi, in the land of the Chaldeans by the river Chebar; and the hand of the LORD was on him there.

⁴ As I looked, a stormy wind came out of the north: a great cloud with brightness around it and fire flashing forth continually, and in the middle of the fire, something like gleaming amber. ⁵ In the middle of it was something like four living creatures. This was their appearance: they were of human form. ⁶ Each had four faces, and each of them had four wings. ⁷ Their legs were straight, and the soles of their feet were like the sole of a calf's foot; and they sparkled like burnished bronze. ⁸ Under their wings on their four sides they had human hands. And the four had their faces and their wings thus: ⁹ their wings touched one another; each of them moved straight ahead, without turning as they moved. ¹⁰ As for the appearance of their faces: the four had the face of a human being, the face of a lion on the right side, the face of an ox on the left side, and the face of an eagle; ¹¹ such were their faces. Their wings were spread out above; each creature had two wings, each of which touched the wing of another, while two covered their bodies. ¹² Each moved straight ahead; wherever the spirit would go, they went, without turning as they went. ¹³ In the middle of^a the living creatures there was

^a Gk OL: Heb *And the appearance of*

something that looked like burning coals of fire, like torches moving to and fro among the living creatures; the fire was bright, and lightning issued from the fire. ¹⁴ The living creatures darted to and fro, like a flash of lightning.

¹⁵ As I looked at the living creatures, I saw a wheel on the earth beside the living creatures, one for each of the four of them.^a ¹⁶ As for the appearance of the wheels and their construction: their appearance was like the gleaming of beryl; and the four had the same form, their construction being something like a wheel within a wheel. ¹⁷ When they moved, they moved in any of the four directions without veering as they moved. ¹⁸ Their rims were tall and awesome, for the rims of all four were full of eyes all around. ¹⁹ When the living creatures moved, the wheels moved beside them; and when the living creatures rose from the earth, the wheels rose. ²⁰ Wherever the spirit would go, they went, and the wheels rose along with them; for the spirit of the living creatures was in the wheels. ²¹ When they moved, the others moved; when they stopped, the others stopped; and when they rose from the earth, the wheels rose along with them; for the spirit of the living creatures was in the wheels.

²² Over the heads of the living crea-

tures there was something like a dome, shining like crystal,^b spread out above their heads. ²³ Under the dome their wings were stretched out straight, one toward another; and each of the creatures had two wings covering its body. ²⁴ When they moved, I heard the sound of their wings like the sound of mighty waters, like the thunder of the Almighty,^c a sound of tumult like the sound of an army; when they stopped, they let down their wings. ²⁵ And there came a voice from above the dome over their heads; when they stopped, they let down their wings.

²⁶ And above the dome over their heads there was something like a throne, in appearance like sapphire;^d and seated above the likeness of a throne was something that seemed like a human form. ²⁷ Upward from what appeared like the loins I saw something like gleaming amber, something that looked like fire enclosed all around; and downward from what looked like the loins I saw something that looked like fire, and there was a splendor all around. ²⁸ Like the bow in a cloud on a rainy day, such was the appearance of the splendor all around. This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the LORD.

When I saw it, I fell on my face, and I heard the voice of someone speaking.

The Vision of the Scroll

2 He said to me: O mortal,^e stand up on your feet, and I will speak with you. ² And when he spoke to me, a spirit entered into me and set me on my feet; and I heard him speaking to me. ³ He said to me, Mortal, I am sending you to the people of Israel, to a nation^f of rebels who have rebelled against me; they and their ancestors have transgressed against me to this very day. ⁴ The descendants are impudent and stubborn. I am sending you to them, and you shall say to them, "Thus says the Lord God." ⁵ Whether they hear or refuse to hear (for they are a rebellious house), they shall know that there has been a prophet among them. ⁶ And you, O mortal, do not be afraid of them, and do not be afraid of their words, though briars and thorns surround you and you live among scorpions; do not be afraid of their words, and do not be dismayed at their looks, for they are a rebellious house. ⁷ You shall speak

^a Heb of their faces

^b Gk: Heb like the awesome crystal

^c Traditional rendering of Heb *Shaddai*

^d Or lapis lazuli

^e Or son of man; Heb *ben adam* (and so throughout the book when Ezekiel is addressed)

^f Syr: Heb to nations

my words to them, whether they hear or refuse to hear; for they are a rebellious house.

8 But you, mortal, hear what I say to you; do not be rebellious like that rebellious house; open your mouth and eat what I give

you. 9 I looked, and a hand was stretched out to me, and a written scroll was in it. 10 He spread it before me; it had writing on the front and on the back, and written on it were words of lamentation and mourning and woe.

Read Ezekiel 2–3

Here we read about the commissioning of Ezekiel, who is referred to as “son of man,” which means humanity or human being. Ezekiel must be prepared for bitter opposition. He is told to eat a scroll for the purpose of appropriating its contents, which have to do with the coming judgment of Judah. Ezekiel is also appointed as a watchman for the house of Israel and assumes a special responsibility for the common good. Ezekiel is speechless while Jerusalem is under siege because his people will only ignore his ominous words.

Reflect: Let us call to mind that the prophet’s journey is never easy.

Pray: May we be as prepared as Ezekiel to carry out difficult roles in life.

Act: Be as open to God’s word as was Ezekiel, even when the commissioning is a challenging one.

3 He said to me, O mortal, eat what is offered to you; eat this scroll, and go, speak to the house of Israel. 2 So I opened my mouth, and he gave me the scroll to eat. 3 He said to me, Mortal, eat this scroll that I give you and fill your stomach with it. Then I ate it; and in my mouth it was as sweet as honey.

4 He said to me: Mortal, go to the house of Israel and speak my very words to them. 5 For you are not sent to a people of obscure speech and difficult language, but to the house of Israel—6 not to many peoples of obscure speech and difficult language, whose words you cannot understand. Surely, if I sent you to them, they would listen to you. 7 But the house of Israel will not listen to you, for they are not willing to listen to me; because all the house of Israel have a hard forehead and a stubborn heart. 8 See, I have made your face hard against their faces, and your forehead hard against their foreheads. 9 Like the hardest stone, harder than flint, I have made your forehead; do not fear them or be dismayed at their looks, for they are a rebellious house. 10 He said to me: Mortal, all my words that I shall speak to you receive in your heart and hear with your ears; 11 then go to the exiles, to your people, and speak to them. Say to them, “Thus says the Lord GOD”; whether they hear or refuse to hear.

Ezekiel at the River Chebar

12 Then the spirit lifted me up, and as the glory of the LORD rose^a from its place, I heard behind me the sound of loud rumbling; 13 it was the sound of the wings of the living creatures brushing against one another, and the sound of the wheels beside them, that sounded like a loud rumbling. 14 The spirit lifted me up and bore me away; I went in bitterness in the heat of my spirit, the hand of the LORD being strong upon me. 15 I came to the exiles at Tel-abib, who lived by the river Chebar.^b And I sat there among them, stunned, for seven days.

16 At the end of seven days, the word of the LORD came to me: 17 Mortal, I have made you a sentinel for the house of Israel; whenever you hear a word from my mouth, you shall give them warning from me. 18 If I say to the wicked, “You shall surely die,” and you give them no warning, or speak to warn the wicked from their

^a Cn: Heb and blessed be the glory of the LORD

^b Two Mss Syr: Heb Chebar, and to where they lived. Another reading is Chebar, and I sat where they sat

wicked way, in order to save their life, those wicked persons shall die for their iniquity; but their blood I will require at your hand. ¹⁹ But if you warn the wicked, and they do not turn from their wickedness, or from their wicked way, they shall die for their iniquity; but you will have saved your life. ²⁰ Again, if the righteous turn from their righteousness and commit iniquity, and I lay a stumbling block before them, they shall die; because you have not warned them, they shall die for their sin, and their righteous deeds that they have done shall not be remembered; but their blood I will require at your hand. ²¹ If, however, you warn the righteous not to sin, and they do not sin, they shall surely live, because they took warning; and you will have saved your life.

Ezekiel Isolated and Silenced

22 Then the hand of the LORD was upon

me there; and he said to me, Rise up, go out into the valley, and there I will speak with you. ²³ So I rose up and went out into the valley; and the glory of the LORD stood there, like the glory that I had seen by the river Chebar; and I fell on my face. ²⁴ The spirit entered into me, and set me on my feet; and he spoke with me and said to me: Go, shut yourself inside your house. ²⁵ As for you, mortal, cords shall be placed on you, and you shall be bound with them, so that you cannot go out among the people; ²⁶ and I will make your tongue cling to the roof of your mouth, so that you shall be speechless and unable to reprove them; for they are a rebellious house. ²⁷ But when I speak with you, I will open your mouth, and you shall say to them, "Thus says the Lord GOD"; let those who will hear, hear; and let those who refuse to hear, refuse; for they are a rebellious house.

Read Ezekiel 4–5

The acts described here are symbolic of the impending siege of Jerusalem and the Babylonian exile. Mixing grain indicates a scarcity of food, including bread. Note, too, that Ezekiel lists the variety of ways in which God can punish.

Reflect: It is profitable to reflect upon the specific requirements of the covenant between God and Israel.

Pray: Pray that the divine presence may always be with us, especially when we are experiencing difficult circumstances.

Act: Our reflections on the covenant with God should lead us to act appropriately, even when we find ourselves in difficult circumstances.

The Siege of Jerusalem Portrayed

4 And you, O mortal, take a brick and set it before you. On it portray a city, Jerusalem; ² and put siegeworks against it, and build a siege wall against it, and cast up a ramp against it; set camps also against it, and plant battering rams against it all around. ³ Then take an iron plate and place it as an iron wall between you and the city; set your face toward it, and let it be in a state of siege, and press the siege against it. This is a sign for the house of Israel.

⁴ Then lie on your left side, and place the punishment of the house of Israel upon it; you shall bear their punishment for the number of the days that you lie there. ⁵ For I assign to you a number of days, three hundred ninety days, equal to the number of the years of their punishment; and so you shall bear the punishment of the house of Israel. ⁶ When you have completed these, you shall lie down a second time, but on your right side, and bear the punishment of the house of Judah; forty days I assign you, one day for each year. ⁷ You shall set your face toward the siege of Jerusalem, and with your arm bared you shall prophesy against it. ⁸ See, I am putting cords on you so that you cannot turn from one side to the other until you have completed the days of your siege.

⁹ And you, take wheat and barley, beans and lentils, millet and spelt; put them into one vessel, and make bread for yourself. During the number of days that you

lie on your side, three hundred ninety days, you shall eat it. ¹⁰ The food that you eat shall be twenty shekels a day by weight; at fixed times you shall eat it. ¹¹ And you shall drink water by measure, one-sixth of a hin; at fixed times you shall drink. ¹² You shall eat it as a barley-cake, baking it in their sight on human dung. ¹³ The LORD said, "Thus shall the people of Israel eat their bread, unclean, among the nations to which I will drive them." ¹⁴ Then I said, "Ah Lord GOD! I have never defiled myself; from my youth up until now I have never eaten

what died of itself or was torn by animals, nor has carrion flesh come into my mouth." ¹⁵ Then he said to me, "See, I will let you have cow's dung instead of human dung, on which you may prepare your bread."

¹⁶ Then he said to me, Mortal, I am going to break the staff of bread in Jerusalem; they shall eat bread by weight and with fearfulness; and they shall drink water by measure and in dismay. ¹⁷ Lacking bread and water, they will look at one another in dismay, and waste away under their punishment.

A Sword against Jerusalem

5 And you, O mortal, take a sharp sword; use it as a barber's razor and run it over your head and your beard; then take balances for weighing, and divide the hair. ² One third of the hair you shall burn in the fire inside the city, when the days of the siege are completed; one third you shall take and strike with the sword all around the city;^a and one third you shall scatter to the wind, and I will unsheathe the sword after them. ³ Then you shall take from these a small number, and bind them in the skirts of your robe. ⁴ From these, again, you shall take some, throw them into the fire and burn them up; from there a fire will come out against all the house of Israel.

⁵ Thus says the Lord GOD: This is Jerusalem; I have set her in the center of the nations, with countries all around her. ⁶ But she has rebelled against my ordinances and my statutes, becoming more wicked than the nations and the countries all around her, rejecting my ordinances and not following my statutes. ⁷ Therefore thus says the Lord GOD: Because you are more turbulent than the nations that are all around you, and have not followed my statutes or kept my ordinances, but have acted according to the ordinances of the nations that are all around you; ⁸ therefore thus says the Lord GOD: I, I myself, am coming against you; I will execute judgments among you in the sight of the nations. ⁹ And because of all your abominations, I will do to you what I have never yet done, and the like of which I will never do again. ¹⁰ Surely, parents shall eat their children in your midst, and children shall eat their parents; I will execute judgments on you, and any of you who survive I will scatter to every wind. ¹¹ Therefore, as I live, says the Lord GOD, surely, because you have defiled my sanctuary with all your detestable things and with all your abominations—therefore I will cut you down;^b my

^a Heb *it*

^b Another reading is *I will withdraw*

eye will not spare, and I will have no pity. ¹² One third of you shall die of pestilence or be consumed by famine among you; one third shall fall by the sword around you; and one third I will scatter to every wind and will unsheathe the sword after them.

¹³ My anger shall spend itself, and I will vent my fury on them and satisfy myself; and they shall know that I, the LORD, have spoken in my jealousy, when I spend my fury on them. ¹⁴ Moreover I will make you a desolation and an object of mocking among the nations around you, in the sight of all that pass by. ¹⁵ You shall be^a a mock-

ery and a taunt, a warning and a horror, to the nations around you, when I execute judgments on you in anger and fury, and with furious punishments—I, the LORD, have spoken—¹⁶ when I loose against you^b my deadly arrows of famine, arrows for destruction, which I will let loose to destroy you, and when I bring more and more famine upon you, and break your staff of bread. ¹⁷ I will send famine and wild animals against you, and they will rob you of your children; pestilence and bloodshed shall pass through you; and I will bring the sword upon you. I, the LORD, have spoken.

Read Ezekiel 6–7

These two prophecies concern Israel's idolatry, that is, judgments upon Judah. "High places" are ritual shrines or sacred groves. "Mountains of Israel" represent all Israel, and the charge is illegitimate worship. The boundaries of Israel are described here when Israel was at its greatest extent. "Wilderness" designates southern Judah; Ribla is situated in Syria. The trumpet summons people to defense, but the people are too weak to answer the call. Sackcloth and baldness are the signs of mourning. The "day of the LORD" signifies the time for destruction and God's response.

Reflect: Reflect on the consequences of disregarding the covenant.

Pray: Pray that you shall always maintain a close covenant relationship with God.

Act: Act with an awareness of the outcome of breaking the covenant relationship with God.

Judgment on Idolatrous Israel

6 The word of the LORD came to me: ² O mortal, set your face toward the mountains of Israel, and prophesy against them, ³ and say, You mountains of Israel, hear the word of the Lord GOD! Thus says the Lord GOD to the mountains and the hills, to the ravines and the valleys: I, I myself will bring a sword upon you, and I will destroy your high places. ⁴ Your altars shall become desolate, and your incense stands shall be broken; and I will throw down your slain in front of your idols. ⁵ I will lay the corpses of the people of Israel in front of their idols; and I will scatter your bones around your altars. ⁶ Wherever you live, your towns shall be waste and your high places ruined, so that your altars will be waste and ruined,^c your idols broken and destroyed, your incense stands cut down, and your works wiped out. ⁷ The slain shall fall in your midst; then you shall know that I am the LORD.

⁸ But I will spare some. Some of you shall escape the sword among the nations and be scattered through the countries. ⁹ Those of you who escape shall remember me among the nations where they are carried captive, how I was crushed by their wanton heart that turned away from me, and their wanton eyes that turned after their idols. Then they will be loathsome in their own sight for the evils that they have committed, for all their abominations. ¹⁰ And they shall know that I am the LORD; I did not threaten in vain to bring this disaster upon them.

¹¹ Thus says the Lord GOD: Clap your hands and stamp your foot, and say, Alas for all the vile abominations of the house of Israel! For they shall fall by the sword, by famine, and by pestilence. ¹² Those far off shall die of pestilence; those nearby shall fall by the sword; and any who are left and are spared shall die of

^a Gk Syr Vg Tg: Heb *It shall be*

^b Heb *them*

^c Syr Vg Tg: Heb *and be made guilty*

famine. Thus I will spend my fury upon them. ¹³ And you shall know that I am the LORD, when their slain lie among their idols around their altars, on every high hill, on all the mountain tops, under every green tree, and under every leafy oak, wherever

they offered pleasing odor to all their idols. ¹⁴ I will stretch out my hand against them, and make the land desolate and waste, throughout all their settlements, from the wilderness to Riblah.^a Then they shall know that I am the LORD.

Impending Disaster

7 The word of the LORD came to me: ² You, O mortal, thus says the Lord GOD to the land of Israel:

An end! The end has come
upon the four corners of the land.

³ Now the end is upon you,
I will let loose my anger upon you;
I will judge you according to your ways,
I will punish you for all your abominations.

⁴ My eye will not spare you, I will have no pity.
I will punish you for your ways,
while your abominations are among you.

Then you shall know that I am the LORD.

⁵ Thus says the Lord GOD:
Disaster after disaster! See, it comes.

⁶ An end has come, the end has come.
It has awakened against you; see, it comes!

⁷ Your doom^b has come to you,
O inhabitant of the land.
The time has come, the day is near—
of tumult, not of reveling on the
mountains.

⁸ Soon now I will pour out my wrath upon you;
I will spend my anger against you.
I will judge you according to your ways,
and punish you for all your abominations.

⁹ My eye will not spare; I will have no pity.
I will punish you according to your ways,
while your abominations are among you.

Then you shall know that it is I the LORD who strike.

¹⁰ See, the day! See, it comes!
Your doom^b has gone out.

The rod has blossomed, pride has budded.

¹¹ Violence has grown into a rod of wickedness.
None of them shall remain,
not their abundance, not their wealth;
no pre-eminence among them.^b

¹² The time has come, the day draws near;
let not the buyer rejoice, nor the seller
mourn,

for wrath is upon all their multitude.

¹³ For the sellers shall not return to what has been sold as long as they remain alive. For the vision concerns all

^a Another reading is *Diblah*

^b Meaning of Heb uncertain

their multitude; it shall not be revoked. Because of their iniquity, they cannot maintain their lives.^a

14 They have blown the horn and made everything ready;
but no one goes to battle,
for my wrath is upon all their
multitude.

15 The sword is outside, pestilence and
famine are inside;
those in the field die by the sword;
those in the city—famine and
pestilence devour them.

16 If any survivors escape,
they shall be found on the
mountains
like doves of the valleys,
all of them moaning over their iniquity.

17 All hands shall grow feeble,
all knees turn to water.

18 They shall put on sackcloth,
horror shall cover them.
Shame shall be on all faces,
baldness on all their heads.

19 They shall fling their silver into the
streets,
their gold shall be treated as
unclean.

Their silver and gold cannot save them on the day of the wrath of the LORD. They shall not satisfy their hunger or fill their stomachs with it. For it was the stumbling block of their iniquity. ²⁰ From their^b beautiful ornament, in which they took pride, they made their abominable images, their detestable things; therefore I will make of it an unclean thing to them.

21 I will hand it over to strangers as booty,
to the wicked of the earth as plunder;
they shall profane it.

22 I will avert my face from them,
so that they may profane my
treasured^c place;
the violent shall enter it,
they shall profane it.

23 Make a chain!^a
For the land is full of bloody crimes;
the city is full of violence.

24 I will bring the worst of the nations
to take possession of their houses.
I will put an end to the arrogance of
the strong,
and their holy places shall be
profaned.

25 When anguish comes, they will seek
peace,
but there shall be none.

26 Disaster comes upon disaster,
rumor follows rumor;
they shall keep seeking a vision
from the prophet;
instruction shall perish from the
priest,
and counsel from the elders.

27 The king shall mourn,
the prince shall be wrapped in
despair,
and the hands of the people of the
land shall tremble.

According to their way I will deal
with them;
according to their own judgments
I will judge them.

And they shall know that I am the LORD.

Abominations in the Temple

8 In the sixth year, in the sixth month, on the fifth day of the month, as I sat in my house, with the elders of Judah sitting before me, the hand of the Lord GOD fell upon me there. ² I looked, and there was a figure that looked like a human being;^d below what appeared to be its loins it was fire, and above the loins it was like the appearance of brightness, like gleaming amber. ³ It stretched out the form of a hand, and took me by a lock of my head; and the spirit lifted me up between earth and heaven, and brought me in visions of God to Jerusalem, to the entrance of the gateway of the inner

^a Meaning of Heb uncertain

^b Syr Symmachus: Heb *its*

^c Or *secret*

^d Gk: Heb *like fire*

Read Ezekiel 8

This chapter includes visions of Ezekiel's visit to see the defilement in the temple. The gateway led north from the palace complex into the temple precincts. Tammuz, a vegetation god, was worshiped in Mesopotamia. Abominations refer to ritual sins. The visions concern specific forms of idolatry in the temple. All types of religious impropriety are contrary to the command against image making.

Reflect: Let us reflect on the forms that idolatry may assume in our own lives. These, too, can sully our covenant relationship with God.

Pray: We should be vigilant, lest our prayer unwittingly take the form of idolatry or religious impropriety.

Act: Always distinguish genuine religious acts from any form of idolatry, magic, or superstition.

court that faces north, to the seat of the image of jealousy, which provokes to jealousy. ⁴ And the glory of the God of Israel was there, like the vision that I had seen in the valley.

⁵ Then God^a said to me, "O mortal, lift up your eyes now in the direction of the north." So I lifted up my eyes toward the north, and there, north of the altar gate, in the entrance, was this image of jealousy. ⁶ He said to me, "Mortal, do you see what they are doing, the great abominations that the house of Israel are committing here, to drive me far from my sanctuary? Yet you will see still greater abominations."

⁷ And he brought me to the entrance of the court; I looked, and there was a hole in the wall. ⁸ Then he said to me, "Mortal, dig through the wall"; and when I dug through the wall, there was an entrance. ⁹ He said to me, "Go in, and see the vile abominations that they are committing here." ¹⁰ So I went in and looked; there, portrayed on the wall all around, were all kinds of creeping things, and loathsome animals, and all the idols of the house of Israel. ¹¹ Before them stood seventy of the elders of the house of Israel, with Jaazaniah son of Shaphan standing among them. Each had his censer in his hand, and the fragrant cloud of incense was ascending. ¹² Then he said to me, "Mortal, have you seen what the elders of the house of Israel are doing in the dark, each in his room of images? For they say, 'The LORD does not see us, the LORD has forsaken the land.'" ¹³ He said also to me, "You will see still greater abominations that they are committing."

¹⁴ Then he brought me to the entrance of the north gate of the house of the LORD; women were sitting there weeping for Tammuz. ¹⁵ Then he said to me, "Have you seen this, O mortal? You will see still greater abominations than these."

¹⁶ And he brought me into the inner court of the house of the LORD; there, at the entrance of the temple of the LORD, between the porch and the altar, were about twenty-five men, with their backs to the temple of the LORD, and their faces toward the east, prostrating themselves to the sun toward the east. ¹⁷ Then he said to me, "Have you seen this, O mortal? Is it not bad enough that the house of Judah commits the abominations done here? Must they fill the land with violence, and provoke my anger still further? See, they are putting the branch to their nose! ¹⁸ Therefore I will act in wrath; my eye will not spare, nor will I have pity; and though they cry in my hearing with a loud voice, I will not listen to them."

^a Heb *he*

Read Ezekiel 9–11

The form of these verses is classically apocalyptic; they deal with the fall of Jerusalem. Note the punishment of the guilty and resultant execution in Jerusalem. The “man clothed in linen” is Yahweh’s scribe. The mark referred to is the Hebrew letter tau, made like an X, the last letter of the Hebrew alphabet. The “glory of the GOD OF ISRAEL” is an expression of God’s presence. The movement of the “glory of the God of Israel” is a literary device and Ezekiel sees it as a return to the restored temple. Mobility is a hallmark of the cherubim who have replaced the living creatures of chapter 1. Chapter 11 is the judgment on wicked counselors. The reference to the kettle protecting the meat from harm reflects the false confidence of the Jerusalemites vis-à-vis the Chaldean (Babylonian) invasion. Incorporated here is the promise of restoration to the exiles in Babylon, including a new covenant.

Reflect: Reflect on the horrible devastation occasioned by the fall of Jerusalem.

Pray: Pray that in our own time we may be spared such horrific destruction.

Act: Cultivate a peaceful relationship with friends and foes, individual and international.

The Slaughter of the Idolaters

9 Then he cried in my hearing with a loud voice, saying, “Draw near, you executioners of the city, each with his destroying weapon in his hand.” ² And six men came from the direction of the upper gate, which faces north, each with his weapon for slaughter in his hand; among them was a man clothed in linen, with a writing case at his side. They went in and stood beside the bronze altar.

3 Now the glory of the God of Israel had gone up from the cherub on which it rested to the threshold of the house. The LORD called to the man clothed in linen, who had the writing case at his side; ⁴ and said to him, “Go through the city, through Jerusalem, and put a mark on the foreheads of those who sigh and groan over all the abominations that are committed in it.” ⁵ To the others he said in my hearing, “Pass through the city after him, and kill; your eye shall not spare, and you shall show no pity. ⁶ Cut down old men, young men and young women, little children and women, but touch no one who has the mark. And begin at my sanctuary.” So they began with the elders who were in front of the house. ⁷ Then he said to them, “Defile the house, and fill the courts with the slain. Go!” So they went out and killed in the city. ⁸ While they were killing, and I was left alone, I fell prostrate on my face and cried out, “Ah Lord GOD! will you destroy all who remain of Israel as you pour out your wrath upon Jerusalem?” ⁹ He said to me, “The guilt of the house of Israel and Judah is exceedingly great; the land is full of bloodshed and the city full of perversity; for they say, ‘The LORD has forsaken the land, and the LORD does not see.’ ¹⁰ As for me, my eye will not spare, nor will I have pity, but I will bring down their deeds upon their heads.”

11 Then the man clothed in linen, with the writing case at his side, brought back word, saying, “I have done as you commanded me.”

God’s Glory Leaves Jerusalem

10 Then I looked, and above the dome that was over the heads of the cherubim there appeared above them something like a sapphire,^a in form resembling a throne. ² He said to the man clothed in linen, “Go within the wheelwork underneath the cherubim; fill your hands with burning coals from among the cherubim, and scatter them over the city.” He went in as I looked on. ³ Now the cherubim were standing on the south side of the house when the man went in; and a cloud filled the inner court. ⁴ Then the glory of the LORD rose up from the cherub to the threshold of the house; the house was filled with the cloud, and the court was full of the

^a Or lapis lazuli

brightness of the glory of the LORD. ⁵ The sound of the wings of the cherubim was heard as far as the outer court, like the voice of God Almighty^a when he speaks.

⁶ When he commanded the man clothed in linen, “Take fire from within the wheelwork, from among the cherubim,” he went in and stood beside a wheel. ⁷ And a cherub stretched out his hand from among the cherubim to the fire that was among the cherubim, took some of it and put it into the hands of the man clothed in linen, who took it and went out. ⁸ The cherubim appeared to have the form of a human hand under their wings.

⁹ I looked, and there were four wheels beside the cherubim, one beside each cherub; and the appearance of the wheels was like gleaming beryl. ¹⁰ And as for their appearance, the four looked alike, something like a wheel within a wheel. ¹¹ When they moved, they moved in any of the four directions without veering as they moved; but in whatever direction the front wheel faced, the others followed without veering as they moved. ¹² Their entire body, their rims, their spokes, their wings, and the wheels—the wheels of the four of them—were full of eyes all around. ¹³ As for the wheels, they were called in my hearing “the wheelwork.” ¹⁴ Each one had four faces: the first face was that of the cherub, the

second face was that of a human being, the third that of a lion, and the fourth that of an eagle.

¹⁵ The cherubim rose up. These were the living creatures that I saw by the river Chebar. ¹⁶ When the cherubim moved, the wheels moved beside them; and when the cherubim lifted up their wings to rise up from the earth, the wheels at their side did not veer. ¹⁷ When they stopped, the others stopped, and when they rose up, the others rose up with them; for the spirit of the living creatures was in them.

¹⁸ Then the glory of the LORD went out from the threshold of the house and stopped above the cherubim. ¹⁹ The cherubim lifted up their wings and rose up from the earth in my sight as they went out with the wheels beside them. They stopped at the entrance of the east gate of the house of the LORD; and the glory of the God of Israel was above them.

²⁰ These were the living creatures that I saw underneath the God of Israel by the river Chebar; and I knew that they were cherubim. ²¹ Each had four faces, each four wings, and underneath their wings something like human hands. ²² As for what their faces were like, they were the same faces whose appearance I had seen by the river Chebar. Each one moved straight ahead.

Judgment on Wicked Counselors

11 The spirit lifted me up and brought me to the east gate of the house of the LORD, which faces east. There, at the entrance of the gateway, were twenty-five men; among them I saw Jaazaniah son of Azzur, and Pelatiah son of Benaiah, officials of the people. ² He said to me, “Mortal, these are the men who devise iniquity and who give wicked counsel in this city; ³ they say, ‘The time is not near to build houses; this city is the pot, and we are the meat.’ ⁴ Therefore prophesy against them; prophesy, O mortal.”

⁵ Then the spirit of the LORD fell upon me, and he said to me, “Say, Thus says the LORD: This is what you think, O house of Israel; I know the things that come into your mind. ⁶ You have killed many in this city, and have filled its streets with the slain. ⁷ Therefore thus says the Lord GOD: The slain whom you have placed

^a Traditional rendering of Heb *El Shaddai*

within it are the meat, and this city is the pot; but you shall be taken out of it. ⁸ You have feared the sword; and I will bring the sword upon you, says the Lord GOD. ⁹ I will take you out of it and give you over to the hands of foreigners, and execute judgments upon you. ¹⁰ You shall fall by the sword; I will judge you at the border of Israel. And you shall know that I am the LORD. ¹¹ This city shall not be your pot, and you shall not be the meat inside it; I will judge you at the border of Israel. ¹² Then you shall know that I am the LORD, whose statutes you have not followed, and whose ordinances you have not kept, but you have acted according to the ordinances of the nations that are around you.”

¹³ Now, while I was prophesying, Pelatiah son of Benaiah died. Then I fell down on my face, cried with a loud voice, and said, “Ah Lord GOD! will you make a full end of the remnant of Israel?”

God Will Restore Israel

¹⁴ Then the word of the LORD came to me: ¹⁵ Mortal, your kinsfolk, your own kin, your fellow exiles,^a the whole house of Israel, all of them, are those of whom the inhabitants of Jerusalem have said, “They have gone far from the LORD; to us this land is given for a possession.” ¹⁶ Therefore say: Thus says the Lord GOD: Though I removed

them far away among the nations, and though I scattered them among the countries, yet I have been a sanctuary to them for a little while^b in the countries where they have gone. ¹⁷ Therefore say: Thus says the Lord GOD: I will gather you from the peoples, and assemble you out of the countries where you have been scattered, and I will give you the land of Israel. ¹⁸ When they come there, they will remove from it all its detestable things and all its abominations. ¹⁹ I will give them one^c heart, and put a new spirit within them; I will remove the heart of stone from their flesh and give them a heart of flesh, ²⁰ so that they may follow my statutes and keep my ordinances and obey them. Then they shall be my people, and I will be their God. ²¹ But as for those whose heart goes after their detestable things and their abominations,^d I will bring their deeds upon their own heads, says the Lord GOD.

²² Then the cherubim lifted up their wings, with the wheels beside them; and the glory of the God of Israel was above them. ²³ And the glory of the LORD ascended from the middle of the city, and stopped on the mountain east of the city. ²⁴ The spirit lifted me up and brought me in a vision by the spirit of God into Chaldea, to the exiles. Then the vision that I had seen left me. ²⁵ And I told the exiles all the things that the LORD had shown me.

Judah's Captivity Portrayed

12 The word of the LORD came to me: ² Mortal, you are living in the midst of a rebellious house, who have eyes to see but do not see, who have ears to hear but do not hear; ³ for they are a rebellious house. Therefore, mortal, prepare for yourself an exile's baggage, and go into exile by day in their sight; you shall go like an exile from your place to another place in their sight. Perhaps they will understand, though they are a rebellious house. ⁴ You shall bring out your baggage by day in their sight, as baggage for exile; and you shall go out yourself at evening in their sight, as those do who go into exile. ⁵ Dig through the wall in their sight, and carry the baggage through it. ⁶ In their sight you shall lift the baggage on your shoulder, and carry it out in the dark; you shall cover your face, so that you may not see the land; for I have made you a sign for the house of Israel.

^a Gk Syr: Heb *people of your kindred*

^b Or to some extent

^c Another reading is a new

^d Cn: Heb *And to the heart of their detestable things and their abominations their heart goes*

Read Ezekiel 12

Here are two symbolic actions and their interpretation concerning the exile. The exile's baggage holds basic food and clothing. Ezekiel condemns a people's skepticism about the prophecies of judgment. Verses 12–14 address the plight of the prince.

Reflect: This portrayal of Judah's captivity is ominous and at the same time realistic. Situations like these have been replicated in many national histories.

Pray: We pray that we may be able to avoid all situations and conditions that can result in such devastation.

Act: Let us act with reverence toward God and harmony toward our neighbors.

7 I did just as I was commanded. I brought out my baggage by day, as baggage for exile, and in the evening I dug through the wall with my own hands; I brought it out in the dark, carrying it on my shoulder in their sight.

8 In the morning the word of the LORD came to me: 9 Mortal, has not the house of Israel, the rebellious house, said to you, "What are you doing?" 10 Say to them, "Thus says the Lord GOD: This oracle concerns the prince in Jerusalem and all the house of Israel in it." 11 Say, "I am a sign for you: as I have done, so shall it be done to them; they shall go into exile, into captivity." 12 And the prince who is among them shall lift his baggage on his shoulder in the dark, and shall go out; he^a shall dig through the wall and carry it through; he shall cover his face, so that he may not see the land with his eyes. 13 I will spread my net over him, and he shall be caught in my snare; and I will bring him to Babylon, the land of the Chaldeans, yet he shall not see it; and he shall die there. 14 I will scatter to every wind all who are around him, his helpers and all his troops; and I will unsheathe the sword behind them. 15 And they shall know that I am the LORD, when I disperse them among the nations and scatter them through the countries. 16 But I will let a few of them escape from the sword, from famine and pestilence, so that they may tell of all their abominations among the nations where they go; then they shall know that I am the LORD.

Judgment Not Postponed

17 The word of the LORD came to me: 18 Mortal, eat your bread with quaking, and drink your water with trembling and with fearfulness; 19 and say to the people of the land, Thus says the Lord GOD concerning the inhabitants of Jerusalem in the land of Israel: They shall eat their bread with fearfulness, and drink their water in dismay, because their land shall be stripped of all it contains, on account of the violence of all those who live in it. 20 The inhabited cities shall be laid waste, and the land shall become a desolation; and you shall know that I am the LORD.

21 The word of the LORD came to me: 22 Mortal, what is this proverb of yours about the land of Israel, which says, "The days are prolonged, and every vision comes to nothing"? 23 Tell them therefore, "Thus says the Lord GOD: I will put an end to this proverb, and they shall use it no more as a proverb in Israel." But say to them, The days are near, and the fulfillment of every vision. 24 For there shall no longer be any false vision or flattering divination within the house of Israel. 25 But I the LORD will speak the word that I speak, and it will

^a Gk Syr: Heb they

be fulfilled. It will no longer be delayed; but in your days, O rebellious house, I will speak the word and fulfill it, says the Lord GOD.

26 The word of the LORD came to me: 27 Mortal, the house of Israel is saying, “The

vision that he sees is for many years ahead; he prophesies for distant times.” 28 Therefore say to them, Thus says the Lord GOD: None of my words will be delayed any longer, but the word that I speak will be fulfilled, says the Lord GOD.

Read Ezekiel 13

False prophets are condemned, as they communicate a false sense of security. If whitewash rather than plaster is used to secure a wall, that wall will fall in a storm. So too the false prophets’ message. Female prophets are also denounced.

The bands and veils perhaps refer to headdresses, or may be charms employed in Babylonian witchcraft. So much for false visions or the practice of divination.

Reflect: How easy it is to be deluded by false prophets and false promises.

Pray: Pray that we may not be led into temptation by all of the entrapments that surround us.

Act: Let us put our confidence in the loving God and not in false prophets.

False Prophets Condemned

13 The word of the LORD came to me: 2 Mortal, prophesy against the prophets of Israel who are prophesying; say to those who prophesy out of their own imagination: “Hear the word of the LORD!” 3 Thus says the Lord GOD, Alas for the senseless prophets who follow their own spirit, and have seen nothing! 4 Your prophets have been like jackals among ruins, O Israel. 5 You have not gone up into the breaches, or repaired a wall for the house of Israel, so that it might stand in battle on the day of the LORD. 6 They have envisioned falsehood and lying divination; they say, “Says the LORD,” when the LORD has not sent them, and yet they wait for the fulfillment of their word! 7 Have you not seen a false vision or uttered a lying divination, when you have said, “Says the LORD,” even though I did not speak?

8 Therefore thus says the Lord GOD: Because you have uttered falsehood and envisioned lies, I am against you, says the Lord GOD. 9 My hand will be against the prophets who see false visions and utter lying divinations; they shall not be in the council of my people, nor be enrolled in the register of the house of Israel, nor shall they enter the land of Israel; and you shall know that I am the Lord GOD. 10 Because, in truth, because they have misled my people, saying, “Peace,” when there is no peace; and because, when the people build a wall, these prophets^a smear whitewash on it. 11 Say to those who smear whitewash on it that it shall fall. There will be a deluge of rain,^b great hailstones will fall, and a stormy wind will break out. 12 When the wall falls, will it not be said to you, “Where is the whitewash you smeared on it?” 13 Therefore thus says the Lord GOD: In my wrath I will make a stormy wind break out, and in my anger there shall be a deluge of rain, and hailstones in wrath to destroy it. 14 I will break down the wall that you have smeared with whitewash, and bring it to the ground, so that its foundation will be laid bare; when it falls, you shall perish within it; and you shall know that I am the LORD. 15 Thus I will spend my wrath upon the wall, and upon those who have smeared it with whitewash; and I will say to you, The wall is no more, nor those who smeared it—16 the prophets of Israel who prophesied concerning Jerusalem and saw visions of

^a Heb they

^b Heb rain and you

peace for it, when there was no peace, says the Lord GOD.

17 As for you, mortal, set your face against the daughters of your people, who prophesy out of their own imagination; prophesy against them ¹⁸ and say, Thus says the Lord GOD: Woe to the women who sew bands on all wrists, and make veils for the heads of persons of every height, in the hunt for human lives! Will you hunt down lives among my people, and maintain your own lives? ¹⁹ You have profaned me among my people for handfuls of barley and for pieces of bread, putting to death persons who should not die and keeping alive persons who should not live, by your lies to my people, who listen to lies.

20 Therefore thus says the Lord GOD: I am against your bands with which you hunt lives;^a I will tear them from your arms, and let the lives go free, the lives that you hunt down like birds. ²¹ I will tear off your veils, and save my people from your hands; they shall no longer be prey in your hands; and you shall know that I am the LORD. ²² Because you have disheartened the righteous falsely, although I have not disheartened them, and you have encouraged the wicked not to turn from their wicked way and save their lives; ²³ therefore you shall no longer see false visions or practice divination; I will save my people from your hand. Then you will know that I am the LORD.

Read Ezekiel 14

God's judgments are justified. Here we have a legal case involving consultation. The four different modes of punishment are presented; they are famine, wild animals, the sword, and pestilence. People cannot escape personal responsibility. The pending punishment of Jerusalem is unavoidable. Only the righteous can be saved. Noah, Daniel, and Job are celebrated in the Bible for their righteousness. The sinful behavior of the exiled Jerusalemites would establish the justice of God's judgment.

Reflect: We all have a responsibility to act in such a way that our communities and our nations do not incur divine punishment.

Pray: We pray for God to give us the strength to avoid the inevitable punishment that follows from sinning.

Act: In all of our actions, let us be righteous like Noah, Daniel, and Job.

God's Judgments Justified

14 Certain elders of Israel came to me and sat down before me. ² And the word of the LORD came to me: ³ Mortal, these men have taken their idols into their hearts, and placed their iniquity as a stumbling block before them; shall I let myself be consulted by them? ⁴ Therefore speak to them, and say to them, Thus says the Lord GOD: Any of those of the house of Israel who take their idols into their hearts and place their iniquity as a stumbling block before them, and yet come to the prophet—I the LORD will answer those who come with the multitude of their idols, ⁵ in order that I may take hold of the hearts of the house of Israel, all of whom are estranged from me through their idols.

⁶ Therefore say to the house of Israel, Thus says the Lord GOD: Repent and turn away from your idols; and turn away your faces from all your abominations. ⁷ For any of those of the house of Israel, or of the aliens who reside in Israel, who separate themselves from me, taking their idols into their hearts and placing their iniquity as a stumbling block before them, and yet come to a prophet to inquire of me by him, I the LORD will answer them myself. ⁸ I will set my face against them; I will make them a sign and a byword and cut them off from the midst of my people; and you shall know that I am the LORD.

⁹ If a prophet is deceived and speaks a word, I, the LORD, have deceived that prophet, and I will stretch out my hand against him, and will destroy him from the midst of my people Israel. ¹⁰ And they shall bear their punishment—the punishment of the inquirer and the punishment of the prophet shall be the same—¹¹ so that the house of Israel may no longer go astray from me, nor de-

^a Gk Syr: Heb *lives for birds*

file themselves any more with all their transgressions. Then they shall be my people, and I will be their God, says the Lord GOD.

12 The word of the LORD came to me: 13 Mortal, when a land sins against me by acting faithlessly, and I stretch out my hand against it, and break its staff of bread and send famine upon it, and cut off from it human beings and animals, 14 even if Noah, Daniel,^a and Job, these three, were in it, they would save only their own lives by their righteousness, says the Lord GOD. 15 If I send wild animals through the land to ravage it, so that it is made desolate, and no one may pass through because of the animals; 16 even if these three men were in it, as I live, says the Lord GOD, they would save neither sons nor daughters; they alone would be saved, but the land would be desolate. 17 Or if I bring a sword upon that land and say, “Let a sword pass through the land,” and I cut off human beings and animals from it; 18 though these three men were in it, as I live, says the Lord GOD, they

would save neither sons nor daughters, but they alone would be saved. 19 Or if I send a pestilence into that land, and pour out my wrath upon it with blood, to cut off humans and animals from it; 20 even if Noah, Daniel,^a and Job were in it, as I live, says the Lord GOD, they would save neither son nor daughter; they would save only their own lives by their righteousness.

21 For thus says the Lord GOD: How much more when I send upon Jerusalem my four deadly acts of judgment, sword, famine, wild animals, and pestilence, to cut off humans and animals from it! 22 Yet, survivors shall be left in it, sons and daughters who will be brought out; they will come out to you. When you see their ways and their deeds, you will be consoled for the evil that I have brought upon Jerusalem, for all that I have brought upon it. 23 They shall console you, when you see their ways and their deeds; and you shall know that it was not without cause that I did all that I have done in it, says the Lord GOD.

Read Ezekiel 15

The wood of the vine is useful only if it produces fruit. Otherwise it is useless. Just so, the inhabitants of Jerusalem are useless and destined for destruction. The Babylonians first attacked Jerusalem in 597 BC.

Reflect: Reflect on how easy it is for a person to become useless and how lack of commitment to covenant responsibilities can lead to this.

Pray: May we always have the strength for positive actions.

Act: Engage only in those activities that are useful and uphold the covenant.

The Useless Vine

15 The word of the LORD came to me:
 2 O mortal, how does the wood of the vine surpass all other wood—
 the vine branch that is among the trees of the forest?
 3 Is wood taken from it to make anything?
 Does one take a peg from it on which to hang any object?
 4 It is put in the fire for fuel;
 when the fire has consumed both ends of it and the middle of it is charred,
 is it useful for anything?
 5 When it was whole it was used for nothing;
 how much less—when the fire has consumed it, and it is charred—
 can it ever be used for anything!
 6 Therefore thus says the Lord GOD: Like the wood of the vine among the trees of the forest, which I have given to the fire for fuel, so I will give up the inhabitants of Jerusalem. 7 I will set my face against them; although they escape from the fire, the fire shall still consume them; and you shall know that I am the LORD, when I set my face against them. 8 And I will make the land desolate, because they have acted faithlessly, says the Lord GOD.

^a Or, as otherwise read, *Danel*

Read Ezekiel 16

This is the allegory of Jerusalem as an orphan and an unfaithful wife. Jerusalem's mixed ancestry (for example: Canaanite, Amorite, and Hittite) leads easily to apostasy. The reference to breasts and pubic hair suggests sexual maturity. Covering with a blanket symbolizes marriage, which is often used as a symbol of the covenant. God will use foreign nations as an instrument for punishing Jerusalem's infidelity.

Reflect: Reflect on the necessity of being loyal to God by observing covenant responsibilities.

Pray: May we never lose sight of our relationship to God as spelled out in the covenant.

Act: Let us act so as not to become entangled in situations that lead away from our primary obligations.

God's Faithless Bride

16 The word of the LORD came to me: ²Mortal, make known to Jerusalem her abominations, ³and say, Thus says the Lord GOD to Jerusalem: Your origin and your birth were in the land of the Canaanites; your father was an Amorite, and your mother a Hittite. ⁴As for your birth, on the day you were born your navel cord was not cut, nor were you washed with water to cleanse you, nor rubbed with salt, nor wrapped in cloths. ⁵No eye pitied you, to do any of these things for you out of compassion for you; but you were thrown out in the open field, for you were abhorred on the day you were born.

⁶I passed by you, and saw you flailing about in your blood. As you lay in your blood, I said to you, "Live! ⁷and grow up^a like a plant of the field." You grew up and became tall and arrived at full womanhood;^b your breasts were formed, and your hair had grown; yet you were naked and bare.

⁸I passed by you again and looked on you; you were at the age for love. I spread the edge of my cloak over you, and covered your nakedness: I pledged myself to you and entered into a covenant with you, says the Lord GOD, and you became mine. ⁹Then I bathed you with water and washed off the blood from you, and anointed you with oil. ¹⁰I clothed you with embroidered cloth and with sandals of fine leather; I bound you in fine linen and covered you with rich fabric.^c ¹¹I adorned you with ornaments: I put bracelets on your arms, a chain on your neck, ¹²a ring on your nose, earrings in your ears, and a beautiful crown upon your head. ¹³You were adorned with gold and silver, while your clothing was of fine linen, rich fabric,^c and embroidered cloth. You had choice flour and honey and oil for food. You grew exceedingly beautiful, fit to be a queen. ¹⁴Your fame spread among the nations on account of your beauty, for it was perfect because of my splendor that I had bestowed on you, says the Lord GOD.

¹⁵But you trusted in your beauty, and played the whore because of your fame, and lavished your whorings on any passer-by.^d ¹⁶You took some of your garments, and made for yourself colorful shrines, and on them played the whore; nothing like this has ever been or ever shall be.^c ¹⁷You also took your beautiful jewels of my gold and my silver that I had given you, and made for yourself male images, and with them played the whore; ¹⁸and you took your embroidered garments to cover them, and set my oil and my incense before them. ¹⁹Also my bread that I gave you—I fed you with choice flour and oil and honey—you set it before them as a pleasing odor; and so it was, says the Lord GOD.

^a Gk Syr: Heb *Live! I made you a myriad*

^b Cn: Heb *ornament of ornaments*

^c Meaning of Heb uncertain

^d Heb adds *let it be his*

²⁰ You took your sons and your daughters, whom you had borne to me, and these you sacrificed to them to be devoured. As if your whorings were not enough! ²¹ You slaughtered my children and delivered them up as an offering to them. ²² And in all your abominations and your whorings you did not remember the days of your youth, when you were naked and bare, flailing about in your blood.

²³ After all your wickedness (woe, woe to you! says the Lord GOD), ²⁴ you built yourself a platform and made yourself a lofty place in every square; ²⁵ at the head of every street you built your lofty place and prostituted your beauty, offering yourself to every passer-by, and multiplying your whoring. ²⁶ You played the whore with the Egyptians, your lustful neighbors, multiplying your whoring, to provoke me to anger. ²⁷ Therefore I stretched out my hand against you, reduced your rations, and gave you up to the will of your enemies, the daughters of the Philistines, who were ashamed of your lewd behavior. ²⁸ You played the whore with the Assyrians, because you were insatiable; you played the whore with them, and still you were not satisfied. ²⁹ You multiplied your whoring with Chaldea, the land of merchants; and even with this you were not satisfied.

³⁰ How sick is your heart, says the Lord GOD, that you did all these things, the deeds of a brazen whore; ³¹ building your platform at the head of every street, and making your lofty place in every square! Yet you were not like a whore, because you scorned payment. ³² Adulterous wife, who receives strangers instead of her husband! ³³ Gifts are given to all whores; but you gave your gifts to all your lovers, bribing them to come to you from all around for your whorings. ³⁴ So you were different from other women in your whorings: no one solicited you to play the whore; and you gave payment, while no payment was given to you; you were different.

³⁵ Therefore, O whore, hear the word of the LORD: ³⁶ Thus says the Lord GOD, Because your lust was poured out and your nakedness uncovered in your whoring with

your lovers, and because of all your abominable idols, and because of the blood of your children that you gave to them, ³⁷ therefore, I will gather all your lovers, with whom you took pleasure, all those you loved and all those you hated; I will gather them against you from all around, and will uncover your nakedness to them, so that they may see all your nakedness. ³⁸ I will judge you as women who commit adultery and shed blood are judged, and bring blood upon you in wrath and jealousy. ³⁹ I will deliver you into their hands, and they shall throw down your platform and break down your lofty places; they shall strip you of your clothes and take your beautiful objects and leave you naked and bare. ⁴⁰ They shall bring up a mob against you, and they shall stone you and cut you to pieces with their swords. ⁴¹ They shall burn your houses and execute judgments on you in the sight of many women; I will stop you from playing the whore, and you shall also make no more payments. ⁴² So I will satisfy my fury on you, and my jealousy shall turn away from you; I will be calm, and will be angry no longer. ⁴³ Because you have not remembered the days of your youth, but have enraged me with all these things; therefore, I have returned your deeds upon your head, says the Lord GOD.

Have you not committed lewdness beyond all your abominations? ⁴⁴ See, everyone who uses proverbs will use this proverb about you, "Like mother, like daughter." ⁴⁵ You are the daughter of your mother, who loathed her husband and her children; and you are the sister of your sisters, who loathed their husbands and their children. Your mother was a Hittite and your father an Amorite. ⁴⁶ Your elder sister is Samaria, who lived with her daughters to the north of you; and your younger sister, who lived to the south of you, is Sodom with her daughters. ⁴⁷ You not only followed their ways, and acted according to their abominations; within a very little time you were more corrupt than they in all your ways. ⁴⁸ As I live, says the Lord GOD, your sister Sodom and her daughters have not done as you and your daughters have done. ⁴⁹ This was the

guilt of your sister Sodom: she and her daughters had pride, excess of food, and prosperous ease, but did not aid the poor and needy. ⁵⁰ They were haughty, and did abominable things before me; therefore I removed them when I saw it. ⁵¹ Samaria has not committed half your sins; you have committed more abominations than they, and have made your sisters appear righteous by all the abominations that you have committed. ⁵² Bear your disgrace, you also, for you have brought about for your sisters a more favorable judgment; because of your sins in which you acted more abominably than they, they are more in the right than you. So be ashamed, you also, and bear your disgrace, for you have made your sisters appear righteous.

⁵³ I will restore their fortunes, the fortunes of Sodom and her daughters and the fortunes of Samaria and her daughters, and I will restore your own fortunes along with theirs, ⁵⁴ in order that you may bear your disgrace and be ashamed of all that you have done, becoming a consolation to them. ⁵⁵ As for your sisters, Sodom and her daughters shall return to their former state, Samaria and her daughters shall return to their former state, and you and your

daughters shall return to your former state. ⁵⁶ Was not your sister Sodom a byword in your mouth in the day of your pride, ⁵⁷ before your wickedness was uncovered? Now you are a mockery to the daughters of Aram^a and all her neighbors, and to the daughters of the Philistines, those all around who despise you. ⁵⁸ You must bear the penalty of your lewdness and your abominations, says the LORD.

An Everlasting Covenant

⁵⁹ Yes, thus says the Lord GOD: I will deal with you as you have done, you who have despised the oath, breaking the covenant; ⁶⁰ yet I will remember my covenant with you in the days of your youth, and I will establish with you an everlasting covenant. ⁶¹ Then you will remember your ways, and be ashamed when I^b take your sisters, both your elder and your younger, and give them to you as daughters, but not on account of my^c covenant with you. ⁶² I will establish my covenant with you, and you shall know that I am the LORD, ⁶³ in order that you may remember and be confounded, and never open your mouth again because of your shame, when I forgive you all that you have done, says the Lord GOD.

The Two Eagles and the Vine

17 The word of the LORD came to me: ² O mortal, propound a riddle, and speak an allegory to the house of Israel. ³ Say: Thus says the Lord GOD:

A great eagle, with great wings and long pinions, rich in plumage of many colors, came to the Lebanon.

He took the top of the cedar,

⁴ broke off its topmost shoot; he carried it to a land of trade, set it in a city of merchants.

⁵ Then he took a seed from the land, placed it in fertile soil; a plant^d by abundant waters, he set it like a willow twig.

⁶ It sprouted and became a vine spreading out, but low; its branches turned toward him, its roots remained where it stood. So it became a vine;

^a Another reading is *Edom*

^b Syr: Heb *you*

^c Heb lacks *my*

^d Meaning of Heb uncertain

Read Ezekiel 17

This is an allegorical fable about eagles, a vine and a cedar. The great eagle is Nebuchadnezzar and an explanation of the allegory follows immediately. The cedar, a majestic tree, is traditionally associated with Lebanon. The cedar represents the house of David. Zedekiah violates his oath of fidelity; consequently God will punish him for disregarding God's covenant with Israel. The fable is then expanded into a messianic allegory. The tender shoot represents the messiah and the lofty mountain is Mt. Zion.

Reflect: Once again, it is important to bear in mind and live according to our covenant commitment.

Pray: Pray that we may always keep our eye on God, lest we become entrapped in situations that lead us astray.

Act: Let us act so as not to unnecessarily complicate our lives.

it brought forth branches,
put forth foliage.

7 There was another great eagle,
with great wings and much plumage.
And see! This vine stretched out
its roots toward him;

it shot out its branches toward him,
so that he might water it.

From the bed where it was planted

8 it was transplanted
to good soil by abundant waters,
so that it might produce branches
and bear fruit

and become a noble vine.

9 Say: Thus says the Lord GOD:

Will it prosper?

Will he not pull up its roots,
cause its fruit to rot^a and wither,
its fresh sprouting leaves to fade?

No strong arm or mighty army will be needed
to pull it from its roots.

10 When it is transplanted, will it thrive?

When the east wind strikes it,
will it not utterly wither,
wither on the bed where it grew?

11 Then the word of the LORD came to me: ¹² Say now to the rebellious house: Do you not know what these things mean? Tell them: The king of Babylon came to Jerusalem, took its king and its officials, and brought them back with him to Babylon. ¹³ He took one of the royal offspring and made a covenant with him, putting him under oath (he had taken away the chief men of the land), ¹⁴ so that the kingdom might be humble and not lift itself up, and that by keeping his covenant it might stand. ¹⁵ But he rebelled against him by sending ambassadors to Egypt, in order that they might give him horses and a large army. Will he succeed? Can one escape who does such things? Can he break the covenant and yet escape? ¹⁶ As I live, says the Lord GOD, surely in the place where the king resides who made him king, whose oath he despised, and whose covenant with him he broke—in Babylon he shall die. ¹⁷ Pharaoh with his mighty army and great company will not help him in war, when ramps are cast up and siege walls built to cut off many lives. ¹⁸ Because he despised the oath and broke the covenant, because he gave his hand and yet did all these things, he shall not escape. ¹⁹ Therefore thus says the Lord GOD: As I live, I will surely return upon his head my oath that he despised, and my covenant that he broke. ²⁰ I will spread

^a Meaning of Heb uncertain

my net over him, and he shall be caught in my snare; I will bring him to Babylon and enter into judgment with him there for the treason he has committed against me.
²¹ All the pick^a of his troops shall fall by the sword, and the survivors shall be scattered to every wind; and you shall know that I, the LORD, have spoken.

Israel Exalted at Last

22 Thus says the Lord GOD:
 I myself will take a sprig
 from the lofty top of a cedar;
 I will set it out.
 I will break off a tender one
 from the topmost of its young twigs;
 I myself will plant it
 on a high and lofty mountain.

²³ On the mountain height of Israel
 I will plant it,
 in order that it may produce boughs
 and bear fruit,
 and become a noble cedar.
 (Under it every kind of bird will
 live;
 in the shade of its branches will
 nest
 winged creatures of every kind.)
²⁴ All the trees of the field shall know
 that I am the LORD.
 I bring low the high tree,
 I make high the low tree;
 I dry up the green tree
 and make the dry tree flourish.
 I the LORD have spoken;
 I will accomplish it.

Read Ezekiel 18

This is a well-known chapter containing Ezekiel's explanation of responsibility. Individuals are to live and die according to their own deeds, not blaming ancestors or others. The expression "eat upon the mountains" refers to food from sacrifices to gods other than Yahweh. These are idolatrous sacrifices practiced on the high places. Society can be divided between the wicked and the righteous, and neither of these characteristics can be passed on to the next generation. God always rejoices when the wicked turn from sin. There is a strong note of admonition and hope that results in a new heart, that is, a new covenant.

Reflect: All people must take responsibility for their own actions.

Pray: May we address our own limitations and misdeeds, seeking to be among those who turn from sin.

Act: Let us repent so as to develop a new heart and, in that way, return and live.

Individual Retribution

18 The word of the LORD came to me: ² What do you mean by repeating this proverb concerning the land of Israel, "The parents have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge"? ³ As I live, says the Lord GOD, this proverb shall no more be used by you in Israel. ⁴ Know that all lives are mine; the life of the parent as well as the life of the child is mine: it is only the person who sins that shall die.

⁵ If a man is righteous and does what is lawful and right—⁶ if he does not eat upon the mountains or lift up his eyes to the idols of the house of Israel, does not defile his neighbor's wife or approach a woman during her menstrual period, ⁷ does not oppress anyone, but restores to the debtor his pledge, commits no robbery, gives his bread to the hungry and covers the naked with a garment, ⁸ does not take advance or accrued interest, withholds his hand from iniquity, executes true justice between contending parties, ⁹ follows my statutes, and is careful to observe my ordinances, acting faithfully—such a one is righteous; he shall surely live, says the Lord GOD.

¹⁰ If he has a son who is violent, a shedder of blood, ¹¹ who does any of these things (though his father^b does none of them), who eats upon the mountains, defiles his neighbor's wife, ¹² oppresses the poor and needy, commits robbery, does not restore the pledge, lifts up his eyes to the idols, commits abomination, ¹³ takes advance or accrued interest; shall he then live? He shall not. He has done all these abominable things; he shall surely die; his blood shall be upon himself.

^a Another reading is *fugitives*

^b Heb *he*

14 But if this man has a son who sees all the sins that his father has done, considers, and does not do likewise, ¹⁵ who does not eat upon the mountains or lift up his eyes to the idols of the house of Israel, does not defile his neighbor's wife, ¹⁶ does not wrong anyone, exacts no pledge, commits no robbery, but gives his bread to the hungry and covers the naked with a garment, ¹⁷ withholds his hand from iniquity,^a takes no advance or accrued interest, observes my ordinances, and follows my statutes; he shall not die for his father's iniquity; he shall surely live. ¹⁸ As for his father, because he practiced extortion, robbed his brother, and did what is not good among his people, he dies for his iniquity.

19 Yet you say, "Why should not the son suffer for the iniquity of the father?" When the son has done what is lawful and right, and has been careful to observe all my statutes, he shall surely live. ²⁰ The person who sins shall die. A child shall not suffer for the iniquity of a parent, nor a parent suffer for the iniquity of a child; the righteousness of the righteous shall be his own, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be his own.

21 But if the wicked turn away from all their sins that they have committed and keep all my statutes and do what is lawful and right, they shall surely live; they shall not die. ²² None of the transgressions that they have committed shall be remembered against them; for the righteousness that they have done they shall live. ²³ Have I any pleasure in the death of the wicked,

says the Lord GOD, and not rather that they should turn from their ways and live? ²⁴ But when the righteous turn away from their righteousness and commit iniquity and do the same abominable things that the wicked do, shall they live? None of the righteous deeds that they have done shall be remembered; for the treachery of which they are guilty and the sin they have committed, they shall die.

25 Yet you say, "The way of the Lord is unfair." Hear now, O house of Israel: Is my way unfair? Is it not your ways that are unfair? ²⁶ When the righteous turn away from their righteousness and commit iniquity, they shall die for it; for the iniquity that they have committed they shall die. ²⁷ Again, when the wicked turn away from the wickedness they have committed and do what is lawful and right, they shall save their life. ²⁸ Because they considered and turned away from all the transgressions that they had committed, they shall surely live; they shall not die. ²⁹ Yet the house of Israel says, "The way of the Lord is unfair." O house of Israel, are my ways unfair? Is it not your ways that are unfair?

30 Therefore I will judge you, O house of Israel, all of you according to your ways, says the Lord GOD. Repent and turn from all your transgressions; otherwise iniquity will be your ruin.^b ³¹ Cast away from you all the transgressions that you have committed against me, and get yourselves a new heart and a new spirit! Why will you die, O house of Israel? ³² For I have no pleasure in the death of anyone, says the Lord GOD. Turn, then, and live.

Israel Degraded

19 As for you, raise up a lamentation for the princes of Israel, ² and say:

What a lioness was your mother
among lions!

She lay down among young lions,
rearing her cubs.

³ She raised up one of her cubs;
he became a young lion,
and he learned to catch prey;
he devoured humans.

^a Gk: Heb *the poor*

^b Or *so that they shall not be a stumbling block of iniquity to you*

Read Ezekiel 19

This is an allegory about lions, but the meaning of this allegory is uncertain. Judah is the lioness. Verse 10 begins the allegory of the vine branch, which is a transplanted vine branch; this is an allusion to the Babylonian exile. The east wind represents Nebuchadnezzar.

Reflect: Reflect upon the implications of the Israelites' exile to Babylon and experiences of exile that you yourself may have had.

Pray: Pray for those in our own time who may feel transplanted or exiled.

Act: In desperate moments, keep in mind that the divine presence is not far away.

- 4 The nations sounded an alarm against him;
he was caught in their pit;
and they brought him with hooks
to the land of Egypt.
- 5 When she saw that she was thwarted,
that her hope was lost,
she took another of her cubs
and made him a young lion.
- 6 He prowled among the lions;
he became a young lion,
and he learned to catch prey;
he devoured people.
- 7 And he ravaged their strongholds,^a
and laid waste their towns;
the land was appalled, and all in it,
at the sound of his roaring.
- 8 The nations set upon him
from the provinces all around;
they spread their net over him;
he was caught in their pit.
- 9 With hooks they put him in a cage,
and brought him to the king of Babylon;
they brought him into custody,
so that his voice should be heard no more
on the mountains of Israel.
- 10 Your mother was like a vine in a vineyard^b
transplanted by the water,
fruitful and full of branches
from abundant water.
- 11 Its strongest stem became
a ruler's scepter;^c
it towered aloft
among the thick boughs;
it stood out in its height
with its mass of branches.
- 12 But it was plucked up in fury,
cast down to the ground;
the east wind dried it up;
its fruit was stripped off,
its strong stem was withered;
the fire consumed it.
- 13 Now it is transplanted into the wilderness,
into a dry and thirsty land.
- 14 And fire has gone out from its stem,
has consumed its branches and fruit,
so that there remains in it no strong stem,
no scepter for ruling.

This is a lamentation, and it is used as a lamentation.

^a Heb *his widows*

^b Cn: Heb *in your blood*

^c Heb *Its strongest stems became rulers' scepters*

Read Ezekiel 20

This chapter concerns Israel's history of infidelity, with its pattern of rebellion (notably rebellion in Egypt). It is a theological retelling of Israel's actions, regardless of divine revelation. "A land flowing with milk and honey" refers to an abundance of resources. In his concern for the sabbath, Ezekiel reflects the influence of the Holiness Code (the ethical and religious laws mentioned in Leviticus). The Babylonian exile serves the same purpose as the wilderness experience following the exodus. Before Jerusalem's destruction, Ezekiel relates the oracle of promise: no more rebellion; only a remnant will survive. Starting with this chapter, the scene shifts to Jerusalem and Zion (God's holy mountain), the site of the temple.

Reflect: Reflect on the relationship between the exodus experience and that of the Babylonian exile.

Pray: May the Lord keep us always faithful.

Act: Let us try to suppress in ourselves a rebellious attitude toward God and one another.

Israel's Continuing Rebellion

20 In the seventh year, in the fifth month, on the tenth day of the month, certain elders of Israel came to consult the LORD, and sat down before me. ² And the word of the LORD came to me: ³ Mortal, speak to the elders of Israel, and say to them: Thus says the Lord GOD: Why are you coming? To consult me? As I live, says the Lord GOD, I will not be consulted by you. ⁴ Will you judge them, mortal, will you judge them? Then let them know the abominations of their ancestors, ⁵ and say to them: Thus says the Lord GOD: On the day when I chose Israel, I swore to the offspring of the house of Jacob—making myself known to them in the land of Egypt—I swore to them, saying, I am the LORD your God. ⁶ On that day I swore to them that I would bring them out of the land of Egypt into a land that I had searched out for them, a land flowing with milk and honey, the most glorious of all lands. ⁷ And I said to them, Cast away the detestable things your eyes feast on, every one of you, and do not defile yourselves with the idols of Egypt; I am the LORD your God. ⁸ But they rebelled against me and would not listen to me; not one of them cast away the detestable things their eyes feasted on, nor did they forsake the idols of Egypt.

Then I thought I would pour out my wrath upon them and spend my anger against them in the midst of the land of Egypt. ⁹ But I acted for the sake of my name, that it should not be profaned in the sight of the nations among whom they lived, in whose sight I made myself known to them in bringing them out of the land of Egypt. ¹⁰ So I led them out of the land of Egypt and brought them into the wilderness. ¹¹ I gave them my statutes and showed them my ordinances, by whose observance everyone shall live. ¹² Moreover I gave them my sabbaths, as a sign between me and them, so that they might know that I the LORD sanctify them. ¹³ But the house of Israel rebelled against me in the wilderness; they did not observe my statutes but rejected my ordinances, by whose observance everyone shall live; and my sabbaths they greatly profaned.

Then I thought I would pour out my wrath upon them in the wilderness, to make an end of them. ¹⁴ But I acted for the sake of my name, so that it should not be profaned in the sight of the nations, in whose sight I had brought them out. ¹⁵ Moreover I swore to them in the wilderness that I would not bring them into the land that I had given them, a land flowing with milk and honey, the most glorious of all lands, ¹⁶ because they rejected my ordinances and did not observe my statutes, and profaned my sabbaths; for their heart went after their idols. ¹⁷ Nevertheless my eye spared them, and I did not

destroy them or make an end of them in the wilderness.

18 I said to their children in the wilderness, Do not follow the statutes of your parents, nor observe their ordinances, nor defile yourselves with their idols. ¹⁹ I the LORD am your God; follow my statutes, and be careful to observe my ordinances, ²⁰ and hallow my sabbaths that they may be a sign between me and you, so that you may know that I the LORD am your God. ²¹ But the children rebelled against me; they did not follow my statutes, and were not careful to observe my ordinances, by whose observance everyone shall live; they profaned my sabbaths.

Then I thought I would pour out my wrath upon them and spend my anger against them in the wilderness. ²² But I withheld my hand, and acted for the sake of my name, so that it should not be profaned in the sight of the nations, in whose sight I had brought them out. ²³ Moreover I swore to them in the wilderness that I would scatter them among the nations and disperse them through the countries, ²⁴ because they had not executed my ordinances, but had rejected my statutes and profaned my sabbaths, and their eyes were set on their ancestors' idols. ²⁵ Moreover I gave them statutes that were not good and ordinances by which they could not live. ²⁶ I defiled them through their very gifts, in their offering up all their firstborn, in order that I might horrify them, so that they might know that I am the LORD.

27 Therefore, mortal, speak to the house of Israel and say to them, Thus says the Lord GOD: In this again your ancestors blasphemed me, by dealing treacherously with me. ²⁸ For when I had brought them into the land that I swore to give them, then wherever they saw any high hill or any leafy tree, there they offered their sacrifices and presented the provocation of their offering; there they sent up their pleasing odors, and there they poured out their drink offerings. ²⁹ (I said to them, What is the

high place to which you go? So it is called Bamah^a to this day.) ³⁰ Therefore say to the house of Israel, Thus says the Lord GOD: Will you defile yourselves after the manner of your ancestors and go astray after their detestable things? ³¹ When you offer your gifts and make your children pass through the fire, you defile yourselves with all your idols to this day. And shall I be consulted by you, O house of Israel? As I live, says the Lord GOD, I will not be consulted by you.

32 What is in your mind shall never happen—the thought, “Let us be like the nations, like the tribes of the countries, and worship wood and stone.”

God Will Restore Israel

33 As I live, says the Lord GOD, surely with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, and with wrath poured out, I will be king over you. ³⁴ I will bring you out from the peoples and gather you out of the countries where you are scattered, with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, and with wrath poured out; ³⁵ and I will bring you into the wilderness of the peoples, and there I will enter into judgment with you face to face. ³⁶ As I entered into judgment with your ancestors in the wilderness of the land of Egypt, so I will enter into judgment with you, says the Lord GOD. ³⁷ I will make you pass under the staff, and will bring you within the bond of the covenant. ³⁸ I will purge out the rebels among you, and those who transgress against me; I will bring them out of the land where they reside as aliens, but they shall not enter the land of Israel. Then you shall know that I am the LORD.

39 As for you, O house of Israel, thus says the Lord GOD: Go serve your idols, every one of you now and hereafter, if you will not listen to me; but my holy name you shall no more profane with your gifts and your idols.

40 For on my holy mountain, the mountain height of Israel, says the Lord GOD,

^a That is *High Place*

there all the house of Israel, all of them, shall serve me in the land; there I will accept them, and there I will require your contributions and the choicest of your gifts, with all your sacred things. ⁴¹ As a pleasing odor I will accept you, when I bring you out from the peoples, and gather you out of the countries where you have been scattered; and I will manifest my holiness among you in the sight of the nations. ⁴² You shall know that I am the LORD, when I bring you into the land of Israel, the country that I swore to give to your ancestors. ⁴³ There you shall remember your ways and all the deeds by which you have polluted yourselves; and you shall loathe yourselves for all the evils that you have committed. ⁴⁴ And you shall know that I am the LORD, when I deal with you for my name's sake, not according to

your evil ways, or corrupt deeds, O house of Israel, says the Lord GOD.

A Prophecy against the Negeb

^{45a} The word of the LORD came to me: ⁴⁶ Mortal, set your face toward the south, preach against the south, and prophesy against the forest land in the Negeb; ⁴⁷ say to the forest of the Negeb, Hear the word of the LORD: Thus says the Lord GOD, I will kindle a fire in you, and it shall devour every green tree in you and every dry tree; the blazing flame shall not be quenched, and all faces from south to north shall be scorched by it. ⁴⁸ All flesh shall see that I the LORD have kindled it; it shall not be quenched. ⁴⁹ Then I said, "Ah Lord GOD! they are saying of me, 'Is he not a maker of allegories?'"

Read Ezekiel 21

In this chapter we find the drawn sword of God. To strike or slap the thigh is a sign of mourning. In biblical times there were three forms of divination. The first was the casting of arrows. These arrows were inscribed with the names of those involved. Or one could consult the household gods, or inspect the livers of newly slaughtered animals. The sword will strike Zedekiah.

Reflect: The present feeling of elation could be only temporary, and may be followed by disappointments.

Pray: Pray that in our journey through life we do not get sidetracked by the immediate pleasures of the world.

Act: In a place of trying to look for signs, take one day at a time and let the future take care of itself.

The Drawn Sword of God

21^b The word of the LORD came to me: ² Mortal, set your face toward Jerusalem and preach against the sanctuaries; prophesy against the land of Israel ³ and say to the land of Israel, Thus says the LORD: I am coming against you, and will draw my sword out of its sheath, and will cut off from you both righteous and wicked. ⁴ Because I will cut off from you both righteous and wicked, therefore my sword shall go out of its sheath against all flesh from south to north; ⁵ and all flesh shall know that I the LORD have drawn my sword out of its sheath; it shall not be sheathed again. ⁶ Moan therefore, mortal; moan with breaking heart and bitter grief before their eyes. ⁷ And when they say to you, "Why do you moan?" you shall say, "Because of the news that has come. Every heart will melt and all hands will be feeble, every spirit will faint and all knees will turn to water. See, it comes and it will be fulfilled," says the Lord GOD.

⁸ And the word of the LORD came to me: ⁹ Mortal, prophesy and say: Thus says the Lord; Say:

A sword, a sword is sharpened,
it is also polished;

¹⁰ it is sharpened for slaughter,
honed to flash like lightning!

How can we make merry?
You have despised the rod,
and all discipline.^c

¹¹ The sword^d is given to be polished,
to be grasped in the hand;

^a Ch 21.1 in Heb

^b Ch 21.6 in Heb

^c Meaning of Heb uncertain

^d Heb *It*

it is sharpened, the sword is polished,
to be placed in the slayer's hand.

¹² Cry and wail, O mortal,
for it is against my people;
it is against all Israel's princes;
they are thrown to the sword,
together with my people.
Ah! Strike the thigh!

¹³ For consider: What! If you despise the
rod, will it not happen?^a says the Lord
GOD.

¹⁴ And you, mortal, prophesy;
strike hand to hand.
Let the sword fall twice, thrice;
it is a sword for killing.
A sword for great slaughter—
it surrounds them;

¹⁵ therefore hearts melt
and many stumble.
At all their gates I have set
the point^a of the sword.
Ah! It is made for flashing,
it is polished^b for slaughter.

¹⁶ Attack to the right!
Engage to the left!
—wherever your edge is directed.

¹⁷ I too will strike hand to hand,
I will satisfy my fury;
I the LORD have spoken.

¹⁸ The word of the LORD came to me:

¹⁹ Mortal, mark out two roads for the sword
of the king of Babylon to come; both of
them shall issue from the same land. And
make a signpost, make it for a fork in the
road leading to a city; ²⁰ mark out the road
for the sword to come to Rabbah of the
Ammonites or to Judah and to^c Jerusalem
the fortified. ²¹ For the king of Babylon
stands at the parting of the way, at the fork
in the two roads, to use divination; he
shakes the arrows, he consults the
teraphim,^d he inspects the liver. ²² Into his
right hand comes the lot for Jerusalem, to
set battering rams, to call out for slaughter,
for raising the battle cry, to set battering
rams against the gates, to cast up ramps,

to build siege towers. ²³ But to them it will
seem like a false divination; they have
sworn solemn oaths; but he brings their
guilt to remembrance, bringing about their
capture.

²⁴ Therefore thus says the Lord GOD:
Because you have brought your guilt to re-
membrance, in that your transgressions
are uncovered, so that in all your deeds
your sins appear—because you have come
to remembrance, you shall be taken in
hand.^e

²⁵ As for you, vile, wicked prince of
Israel,
you whose day has come,
the time of final punishment,

²⁶ thus says the Lord GOD:
Remove the turban, take off the
crown;
things shall not remain as they are.
Exalt that which is low,
abase that which is high.

²⁷ A ruin, a ruin, a ruin—
I will make it!
(Such has never occurred.)
Until he comes whose right it is;
to him I will give it.

²⁸ As for you, mortal, prophesy, and
say, Thus says the Lord GOD concerning
the Ammonites, and concerning their re-
proach; say:

A sword, a sword! Drawn for
slaughter,
polished to consume,^f to flash
like lightning.

²⁹ Offering false visions for you,
divining lies for you,
they place you over the necks
of the vile, wicked ones—
those whose day has come,
the time of final punishment.

³⁰ Return it to its sheath!
In the place where you were
created,
in the land of your origin,
I will judge you.

^a Meaning of Heb uncertain

^b Tg: Heb *wrapped up*

^c Gk Syr: Heb *Judah in*

^d Or *the household gods*

^e Or *be taken captive*

^f Cn: Heb *to contain*

31 I will pour out my indignation upon you,
with the fire of my wrath
I will blow upon you.
I will deliver you into brutish hands,
those skillful to destroy.

32 You shall be fuel for the fire,
your blood shall enter the earth;
you shall be remembered no
more,
for I the LORD have spoken.

Read Ezekiel 22

The crimes of Jerusalem will call forth judgment on both Jerusalem and Judah. For recourse to illicit sexual practices, we may expect to be punished. In Ezekiel's reference to metallurgy, Israel is the dross. Judgment will be like the smelter in which the base metals are removed. All members of the Judahite society have sinned and consequently must be punished.

Reflect: Reflect on the sinfulness that surrounds us on every side.

Pray: May we avoid identifying with the corrupt aspects of our society.

Act: Walk in the straight and narrow path.

The Bloody City

22 The word of the LORD came to me: ²You, mortal, will you judge, will you judge the bloody city? Then declare to it all its abominable deeds. ³You shall say, Thus says the Lord GOD: A city! Shedding blood within itself; its time has come; making its idols, defiling itself. ⁴You have become guilty by the blood that you have shed, and defiled by the idols that you have made; you have brought your day near, the appointed time of your years has come. Therefore I have made you a disgrace before the nations, and a mockery to all the countries. ⁵Those who are near and those who are far from you will mock you, you infamous one, full of tumult.

⁶The princes of Israel in you, everyone according to his power, have been bent on shedding blood. ⁷Father and mother are treated with contempt in you; the alien residing within you suffers extortion; the orphan and the widow are wronged in you. ⁸You have despised my holy things, and profaned my sabbaths. ⁹In you are those who slander to shed blood, those in you who eat upon the mountains, who commit lewdness in your midst. ¹⁰In you they uncover their fathers' nakedness; in you they violate women in their menstrual periods. ¹¹One commits abomination with his neighbor's wife; another lewdly defiles his daughter-in-law; another in you defiles his sister, his father's daughter. ¹²In you, they take bribes to shed blood; you take both advance interest and accrued interest, and make gain of your neighbors by extortion; and you have forgotten me, says the Lord GOD.

¹³See, I strike my hands together at the dishonest gain you have made, and at the blood that has been shed within you. ¹⁴Can your courage endure, or can your hands remain strong in the days when I shall deal with you? I the LORD have spoken, and I will do it. ¹⁵I will scatter you among the nations and disperse you through the countries, and I will purge your filthiness out of you. ¹⁶And I^a shall be profaned through you in the sight of the nations; and you shall know that I am the LORD.

¹⁷The word of the LORD came to me: ¹⁸Mortal, the house of Israel has become dross to me; all of them, silver,^b bronze, tin, iron, and lead. In the smelter they have become dross. ¹⁹Therefore thus says the Lord GOD: Because you have all become dross, I will gather you into

^a Gk Syr Vg: Heb you

^b Transposed from the end of the verse; compare verse 20

the midst of Jerusalem. ²⁰ As one gathers silver, bronze, iron, lead, and tin into a smelter, to blow the fire upon them in order to melt them; so I will gather you in my anger and in my wrath, and I will put you in and melt you. ²¹ I will gather you and blow upon you with the fire of my wrath, and you shall be melted within it. ²² As silver is melted in a smelter, so you shall be melted in it; and you shall know that I the LORD have poured out my wrath upon you.

²³ The word of the LORD came to me: ²⁴ Mortal, say to it: You are a land that is not cleansed, not rained upon in the day of indignation. ²⁵ Its princes^a within it are like a roaring lion tearing the prey; they have devoured human lives; they have taken treasure and precious things; they have made many widows within it. ²⁶ Its priests have done violence to my teaching and have profaned my holy things; they have made no distinction between the holy and the common, neither have they taught the

difference between the unclean and the clean, and they have disregarded my sabbaths, so that I am profaned among them. ²⁷ Its officials within it are like wolves tearing the prey, shedding blood, destroying lives to get dishonest gain. ²⁸ Its prophets have smeared whitewash on their behalf, seeing false visions and divining lies for them, saying, "Thus says the Lord GOD," when the LORD has not spoken. ²⁹ The people of the land have practiced extortion and committed robbery; they have oppressed the poor and needy, and have extorted from the alien without redress. ³⁰ And I sought for anyone among them who would repair the wall and stand in the breach before me on behalf of the land, so that I would not destroy it; but I found no one. ³¹ Therefore I have poured out my indignation upon them; I have consumed them with the fire of my wrath; I have returned their conduct upon their heads, says the Lord GOD.

Oholah and Oholibah

23 The word of the LORD came to me: ² Mortal, there were two women, the daughters of one mother; ³ they played the whore in Egypt; they played the whore in their youth; their breasts were caressed there, and their virgin bosoms were fondled. ⁴ Oholah was the name of the elder and Oholibah the name of her sister. They became mine, and they bore sons and daughters. As for their names, Oholah is Samaria, and Oholibah is Jerusalem.

⁵ Oholah played the whore while she was mine; she lusted after her lovers the Assyrians, warriors^b ⁶ clothed in blue, governors and commanders, all of them handsome young men, mounted horsemen. ⁷ She bestowed her favors upon them, the choicest men of Assyria all of them; and she defiled herself with all the idols of every- one for whom she lusted. ⁸ She did not give up her whorings that she had practiced since Egypt; for in her youth men had lain with her and fondled her virgin bosom and poured out their lust upon her. ⁹ Therefore I delivered her into the hands of her lovers, into the hands of the Assyrians, for whom she lusted. ¹⁰ These uncovered her nakedness; they seized her sons and her daughters; and they killed her with the sword. Judgment was executed upon her, and she became a byword among women.

^a Gk: Heb *indignation*. ²⁵ *A conspiracy of its prophets*

^b Meaning of Heb uncertain

Read Ezekiel 23

In this allegory of the sisters, Oholah and Oholibah, Ezekiel uses course language in order to tell a sordid tale. Oholah, meaning (“her own tent”) represents Samaria, and Oholibah (meaning “my tent is in her”) stands for Jerusalem. In the Hebrew Bible, Ohel may describe a Bedouin tent, or Yahweh’s tent. God’s real tent is in Jerusalem.

Ezekiel considers foreign alliances to be a sign of disloyalty to God. The poem about the cup of wrath links Jerusalem’s destiny with Samaria’s. A final reflection points to a new direction.

Reflect: Consider what it means to be entangled in alliances that can easily distract us from our goals in life.

Pray: Pray that we not allow ourselves to be sidetracked from our genuine purpose in life.

Act: Let us act with an awareness of the pitfalls that surround us.

11 Her sister Oholibah saw this, yet she was more corrupt than she in her lusting and in her whorings, which were worse than those of her sister. 12 She lusted after the Assyrians, governors and commanders, warriors^a clothed in full armor, mounted horsemen, all of them handsome young men. 13 And I saw that she was defiled; they both took the same way. 14 But she carried her whorings further; she saw male figures carved on the wall, images of the Chaldeans portrayed in vermilion, 15 with belts around their waists, with flowing turbans on their heads, all of them looking like officers—a picture of Babylonians whose native land was Chaldea. 16 When she saw them she lusted after them, and sent messengers to them in Chaldea. 17 And the Babylonians came to her into the bed of love, and they defiled her with their lust; and after she defiled herself with them, she turned from them in disgust. 18 When she carried on her whorings so openly and flaunted her nakedness, I turned in disgust from her, as I had turned from her sister. 19 Yet she increased her whorings, remembering the days of her youth, when she played the whore in the land of Egypt 20 and lusted after her paramours there, whose members were like those of donkeys, and whose emission was like that of stallions. 21 Thus you longed for the lewdness of your youth, when the Egyptians^b fondled your bosom and caressed^c your young breasts.

22 Therefore, O Oholibah, thus says the Lord GOD: I will rouse against you your lovers from whom you turned in disgust, and I will bring them against you from every side: 23 the Babylonians and all the Chaldeans, Pekod and Shoa and Koa, and all the Assyrians with them, handsome young men, governors and commanders all of them, officers and warriors,^d all of them riding on horses. 24 They shall come against you from the north^e with chariots and wagons and a host of peoples; they shall set themselves against you on every side with buckler, shield, and helmet, and I will commit the judgment to them, and they shall judge you according to their ordinances. 25 I will direct my indignation against you, in order that they may deal with you in fury. They shall cut off your nose and your ears, and your survivors shall fall by the sword. They shall seize your sons and your daughters, and your survivors shall be devoured by fire. 26 They shall also strip you of your clothes and take away your fine jewels. 27 So I will put an end to your lewdness and your whoring brought from the land of Egypt; you shall not long for them, or remember Egypt any more. 28 For thus says the Lord GOD: I will deliver you into the hands of those whom you hate, into the hands of those from whom you turned in disgust; 29 and they shall deal with you in hatred, and

^a Meaning of Heb uncertain

^b Two Mss: MT from Egypt

^c Cn: Heb for the sake of

^d Compare verses 6 and 12: Heb *officers and called ones*

^e Gk: Meaning of Heb uncertain

take away all the fruit of your labor, and leave you naked and bare, and the nakedness of your whorings shall be exposed. Your lewdness and your whorings ³⁰ have brought this upon you, because you played the whore with the nations, and polluted yourself with their idols. ³¹ You have gone the way of your sister; therefore I will give her cup into your hand. ³² Thus says the Lord GOD:

You shall drink your sister's cup,
deep and wide;
you shall be scorned and derided,
it holds so much.

³³ You shall be filled with drunkenness
and sorrow.

A cup of horror and desolation
is the cup of your sister Samaria;

³⁴ you shall drink it and drain it out,
and gnaw its sherds,
and tear out your breasts;

for I have spoken, says the Lord GOD. ³⁵ Therefore thus says the Lord GOD: Because you have forgotten me and cast me behind your back, therefore bear the consequences of your lewdness and whorings.

³⁶ The LORD said to me: Mortal, will you judge Oholah and Oholibah? Then declare to them their abominable deeds. ³⁷ For they have committed adultery, and blood is on their hands; with their idols they have committed adultery; and they have even offered up to them for food the children whom they had borne to me. ³⁸ Moreover this they have done to me: they have defiled my sanctuary on the same day and profaned my sabbaths. ³⁹ For when they had slaughtered their children for their

idols, on the same day they came into my sanctuary to profane it. This is what they did in my house.

⁴⁰ They even sent for men to come from far away, to whom a messenger was sent, and they came. For them you bathed yourself, painted your eyes, and decked yourself with ornaments; ⁴¹ you sat on a stately couch, with a table spread before it on which you had placed my incense and my oil. ⁴² The sound of a raucous multitude was around her, with many of the rabble brought in drunken from the wilderness; and they put bracelets on the arms^a of the women, and beautiful crowns upon their heads.

⁴³ Then I said, Ah, she is worn out with adulteries, but they carry on their sexual acts with her. ⁴⁴ For they have gone in to her, as one goes in to a whore. Thus they went in to Oholah and to Oholibah, wanton women. ⁴⁵ But righteous judges shall declare them guilty of adultery and of bloodshed; because they are adulteresses and blood is on their hands.

⁴⁶ For thus says the Lord GOD: Bring up an assembly against them, and make them an object of terror and of plunder. ⁴⁷ The assembly shall stone them and with their swords they shall cut them down; they shall kill their sons and their daughters, and burn up their houses. ⁴⁸ Thus will I put an end to lewdness in the land, so that all women may take warning and not commit lewdness as you have done. ⁴⁹ They shall repay you for your lewdness, and you shall bear the penalty for your sinful idolatry; and you shall know that I am the Lord GOD.

The Boiling Pot

24 In the ninth year, in the tenth month, on the tenth day of the month, the word of the LORD came to me: ² Mortal, write down the name of this day, this very day. The king of Babylon has laid siege to Jerusalem this very day. ³ And utter an allegory to the rebellious house and say to them, Thus says the Lord GOD:

Set on the pot, set it on,
pour in water also;

⁴ put in it the pieces,

^a Heb hands

Read Ezekiel 24

This chapter has to do with the siege of Jerusalem. The first section is called the allegory of the pot. The pot symbolizes punishment rather than security. The allegory is an argument with those who continue to quote slogans about Jerusalem being as durable as a metal cauldron. Jerusalemites are compared to meat boiled in a pot. This summarizes their punishment rather than their supposed protection. The death of Ezekiel's wife is a symbol of the destruction of the temple. The fall of Jerusalem will come so suddenly that the exiles will have no time to go into mourning. Ezekiel will proclaim a new message of restoration.

Reflect: Reflect upon the imminence of death in our own lives.

Pray: Pray that the Lord will safeguard us as we journey through life.

Act: Treat every day as significant.

all the good pieces, the thigh and the shoulder;

fill it with choice bones.

- ⁵ Take the choicest one of the flock, pile the logs^a under it; boil its pieces,^b seethe^c also its bones in it.

- ⁶ Therefore thus says the Lord GOD: Woe to the bloody city, the pot whose rust is in it, whose rust has not gone out of it! Empty it piece by piece, making no choice at all.^d

- ⁷ For the blood she shed is inside it; she placed it on a bare rock; she did not pour it out on the ground, to cover it with earth.

- ⁸ To rouse my wrath, to take vengeance, I have placed the blood she shed on a bare rock, so that it may not be covered.

- ⁹ Therefore thus says the Lord GOD: Woe to the bloody city! I will even make the pile great.

- ¹⁰ Heap up the logs, kindle the fire; boil the meat well, mix in the spices, let the bones be burned.

- ¹¹ Stand it empty upon the coals, so that it may become hot, its copper glow, its filth melt in it, its rust be consumed.

- ¹² In vain I have wearied myself;^e its thick rust does not depart. To the fire with its rust!^f

- ¹³ Yet, when I cleansed you in your filthy lewdness, you did not become clean from your filth; you shall not again be cleansed until I have satisfied my fury upon you.

- ¹⁴ I the LORD have spoken; the time is coming, I will act. I will not refrain, I will not spare, I will not relent. According to your ways and your doings I will judge you, says the Lord GOD.

Ezekiel's Bereavement

¹⁵ The word of the LORD came to me: ¹⁶ Mortal, with one blow I am about to take away from you the delight of your eyes; yet you shall not mourn or weep, nor shall your tears run down. ¹⁷ Sigh, but not aloud; make no mourning for the dead. Bind on your turban, and put your sandals on your feet; do not cover your upper lip

^a Compare verse 10: Heb *the bones*

^b Two Mss: Heb *its boilings*

^c Cn: Heb *its bones seethe*

^d Heb *piece, no lot has fallen on it*

^e Cn: Meaning of Heb uncertain

^f Meaning of Heb uncertain

or eat the bread of mourners.^a ¹⁸ So I spoke to the people in the morning, and at evening my wife died. And on the next morning I did as I was commanded.

¹⁹ Then the people said to me, “Will you not tell us what these things mean for us, that you are acting this way?” ²⁰ Then I said to them: The word of the LORD came to me: ²¹ Say to the house of Israel, Thus says the Lord GOD: I will profane my sanctuary, the pride of your power, the delight of your eyes, and your heart’s desire; and your sons and your daughters whom you left behind shall fall by the sword. ²² And you shall do as I have done; you shall not cover your upper lip or eat the bread of mourners.^a ²³ Your turbans shall be on your heads and your sandals on your feet; you shall

not mourn or weep, but you shall pine away in your iniquities and groan to one another. ²⁴ Thus Ezekiel shall be a sign to you; you shall do just as he has done. When this comes, then you shall know that I am the Lord GOD.

²⁵ And you, mortal, on the day when I take from them their stronghold, their joy and glory, the delight of their eyes and their heart’s affection, and also^b their sons and their daughters, ²⁶ on that day, one who has escaped will come to you to report to you the news. ²⁷ On that day your mouth shall be opened to the one who has escaped, and you shall speak and no longer be silent. So you shall be a sign to them; and they shall know that I am the LORD.

Read Ezekiel 25

The next several chapters deal with prophecies against foreign nations that played a part in the shameful demise of Judah and Jerusalem. At this point in the book, Ezekiel is the connector between the message of doom and the message of hope.

Reflect: Reflect on the relationship between doom and hope.

Pray: Pray that in the midst of doom, we may never lose sight of the message of hope.

Act: Let us act with confidence that God will help us through our own times of doom.

Proclamation against Ammon

25 The word of the LORD came to me: ² Mortal, set your face toward the Ammonites and prophesy against them. ³ Say to the Ammonites, Hear the word of the Lord GOD: Thus says the Lord GOD, Because you said, “Aha!” over my sanctuary when it was profaned, and over the land of Israel when it was made desolate, and over the house of Judah when it went into exile; ⁴ therefore I am handing you over to the people of the east for a possession. They shall set their encampments among you and pitch their tents in your midst; they shall eat your fruit, and they shall drink your milk. ⁵ I will make Rabbah a pasture for camels and Ammon a fold for flocks. Then you shall know that I am the LORD. ⁶ For thus says the Lord GOD: Because you have clapped your hands and stamped your feet and rejoiced with all the malice within you against the land of Israel, ⁷ therefore I have stretched out my hand against you, and will hand you over as plunder to the nations. I will cut you off from the peoples and will make you perish out of the countries; I will destroy you. Then you shall know that I am the LORD.

Proclamation against Moab

⁸ Thus says the Lord GOD: Because Moab^c said, The house of Judah is like all the other nations, ⁹ therefore I will lay open the flank of Moab from the towns^d on its frontier, the glory of the country, Beth-jeshimoth, Baal-meon, and Kiriathaim. ¹⁰ I will give it along with Ammon to the people of the east as a possession. Thus Ammon shall be remembered no more among the nations, ¹¹ and

^a Vg Tg: Heb of men

^b Heb lacks and also

^c Gk Old Latin: Heb *Moab and Seir*

^d Heb towns from its towns

I will execute judgments upon Moab. Then they shall know that I am the LORD.

Proclamation against Edom

12 Thus says the Lord GOD: Because Edom acted revengefully against the house of Judah and has grievously offended in taking vengeance upon them, ¹³ therefore thus says the Lord GOD, I will stretch out my hand against Edom, and cut off from it humans and animals, and I will make it desolate; from Teman even to Dedan they shall fall by the sword. ¹⁴ I will lay my vengeance upon Edom by the hand of my people Israel; and they shall act in Edom according to my anger

and according to my wrath; and they shall know my vengeance, says the Lord GOD.

Proclamation against Philistia

15 Thus says the Lord GOD: Because with unending hostilities the Philistines acted in vengeance, and with malice of heart took revenge in destruction; ¹⁶ therefore thus says the Lord GOD, I will stretch out my hand against the Philistines, cut off the Cherethites, and destroy the rest of the sea-coast. ¹⁷ I will execute great vengeance on them with wrathful punishments. Then they shall know that I am the LORD, when I lay my vengeance on them.

Read Ezekiel 26

These chapters contain oracles against Tyre and its rulers. The destruction by Nebuchadnezzar is described and followed by a lament over the princes of the sea, that is, rulers of the islands and coastal cities with commercial ties to Tyre. "Pit" refers to the netherworld, abode of the dead.

Reflect: Reflect on the meaning of the netherworld in our own day.

Pray: Pray that we may always keep in mind the connection between our deeds and their consequences.

Act: We must be understanding of the weaknesses of our contemporaries and steer clear of judging others too quickly.

Proclamation against Tyre

26 In the eleventh year, on the first day of the month, the word of the LORD came to me: ² Mortal, because Tyre said concerning Jerusalem,

"Aha, broken is the gateway of the peoples;
it has swung open to me;
I shall be replenished,
now that it is wasted,"

³ therefore, thus says the Lord GOD:

See, I am against you, O Tyre!
I will hurl many nations against you,
as the sea hurls its waves.

⁴ They shall destroy the walls of Tyre
and break down its towers.

I will scrape its soil from it
and make it a bare rock.

⁵ It shall become, in the midst of the sea,
a place for spreading nets.

I have spoken, says the Lord GOD.

It shall become plunder for the nations,
⁶ and its daughter-towns in the country
shall be killed by the sword.

Then they shall know that I am the LORD.

⁷ For thus says the Lord GOD: I will bring against Tyre from the north King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon, king of kings, together with horses, chariots, cavalry, and a great and powerful army.

⁸ Your daughter-towns in the country
he shall put to the sword.

He shall set up a siege wall against you,
cast up a ramp against you,
and raise a roof of shields against you.

⁹ He shall direct the shock of his battering rams
against your walls

and break down your towers with his axes.

10 His horses shall be so many that their dust shall cover you. At the noise of cavalry, wheels, and chariots your very walls shall shake, when he enters your gates like those entering a breached city.

11 With the hoofs of his horses he shall trample all your streets. He shall put your people to the sword, and your strong pillars shall fall to the ground.

12 They will plunder your riches and loot your merchandise; they shall break down your walls and destroy your fine houses. Your stones and timber and soil they shall cast into the water.

13 I will silence the music of your songs; the sound of your lyres shall be heard no more.

14 I will make you a bare rock; you shall be a place for spreading nets. You shall never again be rebuilt, for I the LORD have spoken, says the Lord GOD.

15 Thus says the Lord GOD to Tyre: Shall not the coastlands shake at the sound of your fall, when the wounded groan, when slaughter goes on within you? 16 Then all

the princes of the sea shall step down from their thrones; they shall remove their robes and strip off their embroidered garments. They shall clothe themselves with trembling, and shall sit on the ground; they shall tremble every moment, and be appalled at you. 17 And they shall raise a lamentation over you, and say to you:

How you have vanished^a from the seas,

O city renowned, once mighty on the sea, you and your inhabitants,^b who imposed your^c terror on all the mainland!^d

18 Now the coastlands tremble on the day of your fall; the coastlands by the sea are dismayed at your passing.

19 For thus says the Lord GOD: When I make you a city laid waste, like cities that are not inhabited, when I bring up the deep over you, and the great waters cover you, 20 then I will thrust you down with those who descend into the Pit, to the people of long ago, and I will make you live in the world below, among primeval ruins, with those who go down to the Pit, so that you will not be inhabited or have a place^e in the land of the living. 21 I will bring you to a dreadful end, and you shall be no more; though sought for, you will never be found again, says the Lord GOD.

Lamentation over Tyre

27 The word of the LORD came to me: ² Now you, mortal, raise a lamentation over Tyre, ³ and say to Tyre, which sits at the entrance to the sea, merchant of the peoples on many coastlands, Thus says the Lord GOD:

O Tyre, you have said,
“I am perfect in beauty.”

4 Your borders are in the heart of the seas;
your builders made perfect your beauty.

5 They made all your planks
of fir trees from Senir;
they took a cedar from Lebanon
to make a mast for you.

6 From oaks of Bashan
they made your oars;

^a Gk OL Aquila: Heb *have vanished, O inhabited one,*

^b Heb *it and its inhabitants*

^c Heb *their*

^d Cn: Heb *its inhabitants*

^e Gk: Heb *I will give beauty*

Read Ezekiel 27

Here we have an allegory comparing Tyre to a cargo ship. This chapter is remarkable for the information it provides about geography and commerce as well as its description of economic transactions. The ship's cargo consists of opulent goods from a variety of nations; it is a virtual catalog of ancient Near Eastern international commerce. Ships of Tarshish may be from Tartessus in southwestern Spain. The lament shifts from details about Tyre's past glory to a description of its abrupt end.

Reflect: Consider how quickly glory and opulence can disappear.

Pray: In our lives, may we keep a happy balance between our daily work and our ultimate purpose.

Act: Let us try to understand the complexity of other people's lives.

they made your deck of pines^a
from the coasts of Cyprus,
inlaid with ivory.

- 7 Of fine embroidered linen from Egypt
was your sail,
serving as your ensign;
blue and purple from the coasts of Elishah
was your awning.
- 8 The inhabitants of Sidon and Arvad
were your rowers;
skilled men of Zemer^b were within you,
they were your pilots.
- 9 The elders of Gebal and its artisans were within you,
caulking your seams;
all the ships of the sea with their mariners were
within you,
to barter for your wares.
- 10 Paras^c and Lud and Put
were in your army,
your mighty warriors;
they hung shield and helmet in you;
they gave you splendor.
- 11 Men of Arvad and Helech^d
were on your walls all around;
men of Gamad were at your towers.
They hung their quivers all around your walls;
they made perfect your beauty.

12 Tarshish did business with you out of the abundance of your great wealth; silver, iron, tin, and lead they exchanged for your wares. ¹³ Javan, Tubal, and Meshech traded with you; they exchanged human beings and vessels of bronze for your merchandise. ¹⁴ Beth-togarmah exchanged for your wares horses, war horses, and mules. ¹⁵ The Rhodians^e traded with you; many coastlands were your own special markets; they brought you in payment ivory tusks and ebony. ¹⁶ Edom^f did business with you because of your abundant goods; they exchanged for your wares turquoise, purple, embroidered work, fine linen, coral, and rubies. ¹⁷ Judah and the land of Israel traded with you; they exchanged for your merchandise wheat from Minnith, millet,^g honey, oil, and balm. ¹⁸ Damascus traded with you for your abundant goods—because of your great wealth of every kind—wine of Helbon, and white wool. ¹⁹ Vedan and Javan from Uzal^g entered into trade for your wares; wrought iron, cassia, and sweet cane were bartered for your merchandise. ²⁰ Dedan traded with you in saddle-cloths for riding. ²¹ Arabia and all the princes of Kedar were your favored dealers in lambs, rams, and goats; in these they did business with you. ²² The merchants of Sheba and Raamah traded with you; they exchanged

^a Or boxwood

^b Cn Compare Gen 10.18: Heb *your skilled men, O Tyre*

^c Or Persia

^d Or and your army

^e Gk: Heb *The Dedanites*

^f Another reading is *Aram*

^g Meaning of Heb uncertain

for your wares the best of all kinds of spices, and all precious stones, and gold.
 23 Haran, Canneh, Eden, the merchants of Sheba, Asshur, and Chilmad traded with you. 24 These traded with you in choice garments, in clothes of blue and embroidered work, and in carpets of colored material, bound with cords and made secure; in these they traded with you.^a 25 The ships of Tarshish traveled for you in your trade.

- So you were filled and heavily laden in the heart of the seas.
 26 Your rowers have brought you into the high seas.
 The east wind has wrecked you in the heart of the seas.
 27 Your riches, your wares, your merchandise,
 your mariners and your pilots,
 your caulkers, your dealers in merchandise,
 and all your warriors within you,
 with all the company that is with you,
 sink into the heart of the seas on the day of your ruin.
 28 At the sound of the cry of your pilots the countryside shakes,
 29 and down from their ships come all that handle the oar.
 The mariners and all the pilots of the sea

- stand on the shore
 30 and wail aloud over you,
 and cry bitterly.
 They throw dust on their heads
 and wallow in ashes;
 31 they make themselves bald for you,
 and put on sackcloth,
 and they weep over you in bitterness of soul,
 with bitter mourning.
 32 In their wailing they raise a lamentation for you,
 and lament over you:
 "Who was ever destroyed^b like Tyre in the midst of the sea?
 33 When your wares came from the seas,
 you satisfied many peoples;
 with your abundant wealth and merchandise
 you enriched the kings of the earth.
 34 Now you are wrecked by the seas,
 in the depths of the waters;
 your merchandise and all your crew have sunk with you.
 35 All the inhabitants of the coastlands are appalled at you;
 and their kings are horribly afraid,
 their faces are convulsed.
 36 The merchants among the peoples hiss at you;
 you have come to a dreadful end and shall be no more forever."

Proclamation against the King of Tyre

- 28** The word of the LORD came to me: ² Mortal, say to the prince of Tyre, Thus says the Lord GOD: Because your heart is proud and you have said, "I am a god; I sit in the seat of the gods, in the heart of the seas," yet you are but a mortal, and no god, though you compare your mind with the mind of a god.
 3 You are indeed wiser than Daniel;^c no secret is hidden from you;
 4 by your wisdom and your understanding you have amassed wealth for yourself, and have gathered gold and silver into your treasuries.

^a Cn: Heb *in your market*

^b Tg Vg: Heb *like silence*

^c Or, as otherwise read, *Danel*

Read Ezekiel 28

This is an oracle against the prince of Tyre. The prince will be slain by the Babylonians. In the lament, note the comparison with Genesis 2 and 3, especially the images of the earthly paradise. Next is a pronouncement against Sidon, another Phoenician port, and verses 24–26 form a conclusion to chapters 25–28.

Reflect: Reflect on the vagaries of history. One-time winners come up later as losers.

Pray: With the Israelites, let us look forward to future blessing when we will live in safety.

Act: Act in such a way as to be worthy of future blessing.

- 5 By your great wisdom in trade
you have increased your wealth,
and your heart has become proud in your wealth.
- 6 Therefore thus says the Lord GOD:
Because you compare your mind
with the mind of a god,
- 7 therefore, I will bring strangers against you,
the most terrible of the nations;
they shall draw their swords against the beauty
of your wisdom
and defile your splendor.
- 8 They shall thrust you down to the Pit,
and you shall die a violent death
in the heart of the seas.
- 9 Will you still say, “I am a god,”
in the presence of those who kill you,
though you are but a mortal, and no god,
in the hands of those who wound you?
- 10 You shall die the death of the uncircumcised
by the hand of foreigners;
for I have spoken, says the Lord GOD.

Lamentation over the King of Tyre

11 Moreover the word of the LORD came to me:
12 Mortal, raise a lamentation over the king of Tyre, and say to him, Thus says the Lord GOD:

- You were the signet of perfection,^a
full of wisdom and perfect in beauty.
- 13 You were in Eden, the garden of God;
every precious stone was your covering,
carnelian, chrysolite, and moonstone,
beryl, onyx, and jasper,
sapphire,^b turquoise, and emerald;
and worked in gold were your settings
and your engravings.^a
On the day that you were created
they were prepared.
 - 14 With an anointed cherub as guardian I placed
you;^a
you were on the holy mountain of God;
you walked among the stones of fire.
 - 15 You were blameless in your ways
from the day that you were created,
until iniquity was found in you.
 - 16 In the abundance of your trade
you were filled with violence, and you sinned;
so I cast you as a profane thing from the
mountain of God,
and the guardian cherub drove you out
from among the stones of fire.
 - 17 Your heart was proud because of your beauty;

^a Meaning of Heb uncertain

^b Or lapis lazuli

you corrupted your wisdom for
the sake of your splendor.

I cast you to the ground;
I exposed you before kings,
to feast their eyes on you.

- 18 By the multitude of your iniquities,
in the unrighteousness of your
trade,
you profaned your sanctuaries.
So I brought out fire from within you;
it consumed you,
and I turned you to ashes on the earth
in the sight of all who saw you.
- 19 All who know you among the
peoples
are appalled at you;
you have come to a dreadful end
and shall be no more forever.

Proclamation against Sidon

20 The word of the LORD came to me:
21 Mortal, set your face toward Sidon, and
prophecy against it, 22 and say, Thus says
the Lord GOD:

I am against you, O Sidon,
and I will gain glory in your midst.
They shall know that I am the LORD

when I execute judgments in it,
and manifest my holiness in it;

- 23 for I will send pestilence into it,
and bloodshed into its streets;
and the dead shall fall in its midst,
by the sword that is against it on
every side.

And they shall know that I am the LORD.

24 The house of Israel shall no longer
find a pricking brier or a piercing thorn
among all their neighbors who have treated
them with contempt. And they shall know
that I am the Lord GOD.

Future Blessing for Israel

25 Thus says the Lord GOD: When I
gather the house of Israel from the peoples
among whom they are scattered, and man-
ifest my holiness in them in the sight of
the nations, then they shall settle on their
own soil that I gave to my servant Jacob.
26 They shall live in safety in it, and shall
build houses and plant vineyards. They
shall live in safety, when I execute judg-
ments upon all their neighbors who have
treated them with contempt. And they shall
know that I am the LORD their God.

Read Ezekiel 29

Chapters 29 through 32 are prophecies against Egypt and its rulers. Egypt and Judah had formed an alliance against the Chaldeans (Babylonians). Pharaoh is likened to a great dragon. Ezekiel addresses Egypt more than any other foreign state. "Horn" may refer to a reestablished Davidic monarchy in Israel.

Reflect: Reflect on the capriciousness of life as demonstrated by, for example, the rise and downfall of the great Egyptian empire.

Pray: Pray that we may never become overwhelmed by the enticements of the transient pleasures of life.

Act: Try to maintain a good balance between enjoyment of life's pleasures and awareness of their limits.

Proclamation against Egypt

29 In the tenth year, in the tenth month, on the twelfth day of the month, the word of the LORD came to me: 2 Mortal, set your face against Pharaoh king of Egypt, and prophecy against him and against all Egypt; 3 speak, and say, Thus says the Lord GOD:

I am against you,
Pharaoh king of Egypt,
the great dragon sprawling
in the midst of its channels,
saying, "My Nile is my own;
I made it for myself."

- 4 I will put hooks in your jaws,
and make the fish of your channels stick to
your scales.

I will draw you up from your channels,
with all the fish of your channels
sticking to your scales.

- 5 I will fling you into the wilderness,
you and all the fish of your channels;
you shall fall in the open field,
and not be gathered and buried.

To the animals of the earth and to
the birds of the air

I have given you as food.

⁶ Then all the inhabitants of Egypt
shall know

that I am the LORD

because you^a were a staff of reed
to the house of Israel;

⁷ when they grasped you with the
hand, you broke,

and tore all their shoulders;

and when they leaned on you, you
broke,

and made all their legs unsteady.^b

⁸ Therefore, thus says the Lord GOD: I will
bring a sword upon you, and will cut off from
you human being and animal; ⁹ and the land
of Egypt shall be a desolation and a waste.
Then they shall know that I am the LORD.

Because you^c said, "The Nile is mine,
and I made it," ¹⁰ therefore, I am against
you, and against your channels, and I will
make the land of Egypt an utter waste and
desolation, from Migdol to Syene, as far as
the border of Ethiopia.^d ¹¹ No human foot
shall pass through it, and no animal foot
shall pass through it; it shall be uninhabited
forty years. ¹² I will make the land of Egypt
a desolation among desolated countries;
and her cities shall be a desolation forty
years among cities that are laid waste. I will
scatter the Egyptians among the nations,
and disperse them among the countries.

¹³ Further, thus says the Lord GOD: At
the end of forty years I will gather the
Egyptians from the peoples among whom

they were scattered; ¹⁴ and I will restore the
fortunes of Egypt, and bring them back to
the land of Pathros, the land of their origin;
and there they shall be a lowly kingdom.
¹⁵ It shall be the most lowly of the king-
doms, and never again exalt itself above
the nations; and I will make them so small
that they will never again rule over the na-
tions. ¹⁶ The Egyptians^e shall never again
be the reliance of the house of Israel; they
will recall their iniquity, when they turned to
them for aid. Then they shall know that I
am the Lord GOD.

Babylonia Will Plunder Egypt

¹⁷ In the twenty-seventh year, in the
first month, on the first day of the month,
the word of the LORD came to me: ¹⁸ Mortal,
King Nebuchadrezzar of Babylon made his
army labor hard against Tyre; every head
was made bald and every shoulder was
rubbed bare; yet neither he nor his army
got anything from Tyre to pay for the labor
that he had expended against it. ¹⁹ There-
fore thus says the Lord GOD: I will give the
land of Egypt to King Nebuchadrezzar of
Babylon; and he shall carry off its wealth
and despoil it and plunder it; and it shall be
the wages for his army. ²⁰ I have given him
the land of Egypt as his payment for which
he labored, because they worked for me,
says the Lord GOD.

²¹ On that day I will cause a horn to
sprout up for the house of Israel, and I will
open your lips among them. Then they
shall know that I am the LORD.

Lamentation for Egypt

30 The word of the LORD came to me: ² Mortal,
prophesy, and say, Thus says the Lord GOD:
Wail, "Alas for the day!"

³ For a day is near,
the day of the LORD is near;
it will be a day of clouds,
a time of doom^f for the nations.

⁴ A sword shall come upon Egypt,
and anguish shall be in Ethiopia,^d
when the slain fall in Egypt,
and its wealth is carried away,
and its foundations are torn down.

^a Gk Syr Vg: Heb *they*

^b Syr: Heb *stand*

^c Gk Syr Vg: Heb *he*

^d Or *Nubia*; Heb *Cush*

^e Heb *It*

^f Heb *lacks of doom*

Read Ezekiel 30

The “lamentation for Egypt” is Israel’s day of restoration. The Egyptian allies will collapse; all Egypt—including Memphis—will be destroyed. The oracles toward the end of the chapter were uttered during the siege of Jerusalem.

Reflect: No matter how stressful life can become, there is always a place for future hope.

Pray: Pray that one day we may experience our full redemption.

Act: Act courageously despite the inevitable obstacles in life.

⁵ Ethiopia,^a and Put, and Lud, and all Arabia, and Libya,^b and the people of the allied land^c shall fall with them by the sword.

⁶ Thus says the LORD:

Those who support Egypt shall fall,
and its proud might shall come down;
from Migdol to Syene
they shall fall within it by the sword,
says the Lord GOD.

⁷ They shall be desolated among other desolated countries,
and their cities shall lie among cities laid waste.

⁸ Then they shall know that I am the LORD,
when I have set fire to Egypt,
and all who help it are broken.

⁹ On that day, messengers shall go out from me in ships to terrify the unsuspecting Ethiopians;^a and anguish shall come upon them on the day of Egypt’s doom;^d for it is coming!

¹⁰ Thus says the Lord GOD:

I will put an end to the hordes of Egypt,
by the hand of King Nebuchadrezzar of Babylon.

¹¹ He and his people with him, the most terrible of the nations,
shall be brought in to destroy the land;
and they shall draw their swords against Egypt,
and fill the land with the slain.

¹² I will dry up the channels,
and will sell the land into the hand of evildoers;
I will bring desolation upon the land and
everything in it
by the hand of foreigners;
I the LORD have spoken.

¹³ Thus says the Lord GOD:

I will destroy the idols
and put an end to the images in Memphis;
there shall no longer be a prince in the land of
Egypt;
so I will put fear in the land of Egypt.

¹⁴ I will make Pathros a desolation,
and will set fire to Zoan,
and will execute acts of judgment on Thebes.

¹⁵ I will pour my wrath upon Pelusium,
the stronghold of Egypt,
and cut off the hordes of Thebes.

¹⁶ I will set fire to Egypt;
Pelusium shall be in great agony;
Thebes shall be breached,
and Memphis face adversaries by day.

^a Or Nubia; Heb Cush

^b Compare Gk Syr Vg: Heb Cub

^c Meaning of Heb uncertain

^d Heb *the day of Egypt*

- 17 The young men of On and of Pi-beseth shall fall by the sword; and the cities themselves^a shall go into captivity.
- 18 At Tehaphnehes the day shall be dark,
when I break there the dominion of Egypt,
and its proud might shall come to an end;
the city^b shall be covered by a cloud,
and its daughter-towns shall go into captivity.
- 19 Thus I will execute acts of judgment on Egypt.
Then they shall know that I am the LORD.

Proclamation against Pharaoh

20 In the eleventh year, in the first month, on the seventh day of the month, the word of the LORD came to me: ²¹ Mortal, I have broken the arm of Pharaoh king of

Egypt; it has not been bound up for healing or wrapped with a bandage, so that it may become strong to wield the sword. ²² Therefore thus says the Lord GOD: I am against Pharaoh king of Egypt, and will break his arms, both the strong arm and the one that was broken; and I will make the sword fall from his hand. ²³ I will scatter the Egyptians among the nations, and disperse them throughout the lands. ²⁴ I will strengthen the arms of the king of Babylon, and put my sword in his hand; but I will break the arms of Pharaoh, and he will groan before him with the groans of one mortally wounded. ²⁵ I will strengthen the arms of the king of Babylon, but the arms of Pharaoh shall fall. And they shall know that I am the LORD, when I put my sword into the hand of the king of Babylon. He shall stretch it out against the land of Egypt, ²⁶ and I will scatter the Egyptians among the nations and disperse them throughout the countries. Then they shall know that I am the LORD.

Read Ezekiel 31

This chapter is an allegory of the cypress and a satire on the divine pretensions of Pharaoh.

Reflect: Reflect on opportunities that will help to defuse animosities between nations and fellow human beings.

Pray: May we try hard to see the innate goodness in others.

Act: Be a peacemaker between rivals.

The Lofty Cedar

31 In the eleventh year, in the third month, on the first day of the month, the word of the LORD came to me: ² Mortal, say to Pharaoh king of Egypt and to his hordes:

Whom are you like in your greatness?

- ³ Consider Assyria, a cedar of Lebanon,
with fair branches and forest shade,
and of great height,
its top among the clouds.^c
- ⁴ The waters nourished it,
the deep made it grow tall,
making its rivers flow^d
around the place it was planted,
sending forth its streams
to all the trees of the field.
- ⁵ So it towered high
above all the trees of the field;
its boughs grew large
and its branches long,
from abundant water in its shoots.
- ⁶ All the birds of the air
made their nests in its boughs;
under its branches all the animals of the field
gave birth to their young;

^a Heb and they

^b Heb she

^c Gk: Heb *thick boughs*

^d Gk: Heb *rivers going*

and in its shade
all great nations lived.

- 7 It was beautiful in its greatness,
in the length of its branches;
for its roots went down
to abundant water.
- 8 The cedars in the garden of God
could not rival it,
nor the fir trees equal its boughs;
the plane trees were as nothing
compared with its branches;
no tree in the garden of God
was like it in beauty.
- 9 I made it beautiful
with its mass of branches,
the envy of all the trees of Eden
that were in the garden of God.

10 Therefore thus says the Lord GOD:
Because it^a towered high and set its top
among the clouds,^b and its heart was proud
of its height, ¹¹ I gave it into the hand of the
prince of the nations; he has dealt with it as
its wickedness deserves. I have cast it out.
¹² Foreigners from the most terrible of the
nations have cut it down and left it. On the
mountains and in all the valleys its branches
have fallen, and its boughs lie broken in
all the watercourses of the land; and all the
peoples of the earth went away from its
shade and left it.

- ¹³ On its fallen trunk settle
all the birds of the air,
and among its boughs lodge
all the wild animals.

¹⁴ All this is in order that no trees by the
waters may grow to lofty height or set their
tops among the clouds,^b and that no trees
that drink water may reach up to them in
height.

For all of them are handed over to
death,
to the world below;
along with all mortals,
with those who go down to the
Pit.

¹⁵ Thus says the Lord GOD: On the day
it went down to Sheol I closed the deep
over it and covered it; I restrained its rivers,
and its mighty waters were checked. I
clothed Lebanon in gloom for it, and all the
trees of the field fainted because of it. ¹⁶ I
made the nations quake at the sound of its
fall, when I cast it down to Sheol with those
who go down to the Pit; and all the trees of
Eden, the choice and best of Lebanon, all
that were well watered, were consoled in
the world below. ¹⁷ They also went down to
Sheol with it, to those killed by the sword,
along with its allies,^c those who lived in its
shade among the nations.

¹⁸ Which among the trees of Eden
was like you in glory and in greatness?
Now you shall be brought down with the
trees of Eden to the world below; you
shall lie among the uncircumcised, with
those who are killed by the sword. This is
Pharaoh and all his horde, says the Lord
GOD.

Lamentation over Pharaoh and Egypt

32 In the twelfth year, in the twelfth month, on the
first day of the month, the word of the LORD
came to me: ² Mortal, raise a lamentation over Pharaoh
king of Egypt, and say to him:

You consider yourself a lion among the nations,
but you are like a dragon in the seas;
you thrash about in your streams,
trouble the water with your feet,
and foul your^d streams.

- ³ Thus says the Lord GOD:
In an assembly of many peoples
I will throw my net over you;
and I^e will haul you up in my dragnet.
- ⁴ I will throw you on the ground,

^a Syr Vg: Heb *you*

^b Gk: Heb *thick boughs*

^c Heb *its arms*

^d Heb *their*

^e Gk Vg: Heb *they*

Read Ezekiel 32

This is a lament over Pharaoh. Ezekiel addresses Pharaoh and likens him to a sea-monster. Then follows a judgment of the monster and a description of its fate. Pharaoh is now the captive and the nations react to his incarcerated state. Egypt is in the underworld, the Pit.

Reflect: “How the mighty have fallen!” (2 Sam 1:19).

Pray: Pray for all those who are on the wrong path that invariably leads to the Pit.

Act: Let us act in such a way as to set an example to others by our lives.

- on the open field I will fling you,
and will cause all the birds of the air to settle on
you,
and I will let the wild animals of the whole
earth gorge themselves with you.
- 5 I will strew your flesh on the mountains,
and fill the valleys with your carcass.^a
- 6 I will drench the land with your flowing blood
up to the mountains,
and the watercourses will be filled with you.
- 7 When I blot you out, I will cover the heavens,
and make their stars dark;
I will cover the sun with a cloud,
and the moon shall not give its light.
- 8 All the shining lights of the heavens
I will darken above you,
and put darkness on your land,
says the Lord GOD.
- 9 I will trouble the hearts of many peoples,
as I carry you captive^b among the nations,
into countries you have not known.
- 10 I will make many peoples appalled at you;
their kings shall shudder because of you.
When I brandish my sword before them,
they shall tremble every moment
for their lives, each one of them,
on the day of your downfall.
- 11 For thus says the Lord GOD:
The sword of the king of Babylon shall come
against you.
- 12 I will cause your hordes to fall
by the swords of mighty ones,
all of them most terrible among the nations.
They shall bring to ruin the pride of Egypt,
and all its hordes shall perish.
- 13 I will destroy all its livestock
from beside abundant waters;
and no human foot shall trouble them any more,
nor shall the hoofs of cattle trouble them.
- 14 Then I will make their waters clear,
and cause their streams to run like oil, says
the Lord GOD.
- 15 When I make the land of Egypt desolate
and when the land is stripped of all that fills it,
when I strike down all who live in it,
then they shall know that I am the LORD.
- 16 This is a lamentation; it shall be chanted.
The women of the nations shall chant it.
Over Egypt and all its hordes they shall chant it,
says the Lord GOD.

^a Symmachus Syr Vg: Heb *your height*

^b Gk: Heb *bring your destruction*

Dirge over Egypt

17 In the twelfth year, in the first month,^a on the fifteenth day of the month, the word of the LORD came to me:

18 Mortal, wail over the hordes of Egypt, and send them down, with Egypt^b and the daughters of majestic nations, to the world below, with those who go down to the Pit.

19 “Whom do you surpass in beauty? Go down! Be laid to rest with the uncircumcised!”

20 They shall fall among those who are killed by the sword. Egypt^c has been handed over to the sword; carry away both it and its hordes. 21 The mighty chiefs shall speak of them, with their helpers, out of the midst of Sheol: “They have come down, they lie still, the uncircumcised, killed by the sword.”

22 Assyria is there, and all its company, their graves all around it, all of them killed, fallen by the sword. 23 Their graves are set in the uttermost parts of the Pit. Its company is all around its grave, all of them killed, fallen by the sword, who spread terror in the land of the living.

24 Elam is there, and all its hordes around its grave; all of them killed, fallen by the sword, who went down uncircumcised into the world below, who spread terror in the land of the living. They bear their shame with those who go down to the Pit. 25 They have made Elam^b a bed among the slain with all its hordes, their graves all around it, all of them uncircumcised, killed

by the sword; for terror of them was spread in the land of the living, and they bear their shame with those who go down to the Pit; they are placed among the slain.

26 Meshech and Tubal are there, and all their multitude, their graves all around them, all of them uncircumcised, killed by the sword; for they spread terror in the land of the living. 27 And they do not lie with the fallen warriors of long ago^d who went down to Sheol with their weapons of war, whose swords were laid under their heads, and whose shields^e are upon their bones; for the terror of the warriors was in the land of the living. 28 So you shall be broken and lie among the uncircumcised, with those who are killed by the sword.

29 Edom is there, its kings and all its princes, who for all their might are laid with those who are killed by the sword; they lie with the uncircumcised, with those who go down to the Pit.

30 The princes of the north are there, all of them, and all the Sidonians, who have gone down in shame with the slain, for all the terror that they caused by their might; they lie uncircumcised with those who are killed by the sword, and bear their shame with those who go down to the Pit.

31 When Pharaoh sees them, he will be consoled for all his hordes—Pharaoh and all his army, killed by the sword, says the Lord GOD. 32 For he^f spread terror in the land of the living; therefore he shall be laid to rest among the uncircumcised, with those who are slain by the sword—Pharaoh and all his multitude, says the Lord GOD.

Ezekiel Israel's Sentry

33 The word of the LORD came to me: ² O Mortal, speak to your people and say to them, If I bring the sword upon a land, and the people of the land take one of their number as their sentinel; ³ and if the sentinel sees the sword coming upon the land and blows the trumpet and warns the people; ⁴ then if any who hear the sound of the trumpet do not take warning, and the sword comes and takes them away, their blood shall be upon their own heads. ⁵ They heard the sound of the trumpet and did not take warning; their blood shall be upon themselves. But if they had taken warning, they

^a Gk: Heb lacks *in the first month*

^b Heb *it*

^c Heb *It*

^d Gk Old Latin: Heb *of the uncircumcised*

^e Cn: Heb *iniquities*

^f Cn: Heb *I*

Read Ezekiel 33

This transition chapter contains prophecies on Israel's restoration. The key admonition is found in verse 11. Ezekiel delivers two responses to those who are demoralized: God wants people to live; and sin is forgivable. Repentance is the way to life. Human beings can achieve it by assuming responsibility for their own lives. From now on, Ezekiel's message is one of hope. In the latter part of this chapter we learn that the new Israel is to be fashioned from the people in exile; at the same time, those living in Judah are indicted.

Reflect: In moments of despair, we should give serious thought to the virtue of hope.

Pray: Pray that we may never lose our confidence in God. May we keep in mind that repentance is the way to life.

Act: Let us always take responsibility for our own lives.

would have saved their lives. ⁶ But if the sentinel sees the sword coming and does not blow the trumpet, so that the people are not warned, and the sword comes and takes any of them, they are taken away in their iniquity, but their blood I will require at the sentinel's hand.

⁷ So you, mortal, I have made a sentinel for the house of Israel; whenever you hear a word from my mouth, you shall give them warning from me. ⁸ If I say to the wicked, "O wicked ones, you shall surely die," and you do not speak to warn the wicked to turn from their ways, the wicked shall die in their iniquity, but their blood I will require at your hand. ⁹ But if you warn the wicked to turn from their ways, and they do not turn from their ways, the wicked shall die in their iniquity, but you will have saved your life.

God's Justice and Mercy

¹⁰ Now you, mortal, say to the house of Israel, Thus you have said: "Our transgressions and our sins weigh upon us, and we waste away because of them; how then can we live?" ¹¹ Say to them, As I live, says the Lord GOD, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from their ways and live; turn back, turn back from your evil ways; for why will you die, O house of Israel? ¹² And you, mortal, say to your people, The righteousness of the righteous shall not save them when they transgress; and as for the wickedness of the wicked, it shall not make them stumble when they turn from their wickedness; and the righteous shall not be able to live by their righteousness^a when they sin. ¹³ Though I say to the righteous that they shall surely live, yet if they trust in their righteousness and commit iniquity, none of their righteous deeds shall be remembered; but in the iniquity that they have committed they shall die. ¹⁴ Again, though I say to the wicked, "You shall surely die," yet if they turn from their sin and do what is lawful and right—¹⁵ if the wicked restore the pledge, give back what they have taken by robbery, and walk in the statutes of life, committing no iniquity—they shall surely live, they shall not die. ¹⁶ None of the sins that they have committed shall be remembered against them; they have done what is lawful and right, they shall surely live.

¹⁷ Yet your people say, "The way of the Lord is not just," when it is their own way that is not just. ¹⁸ When the righteous turn from their righteousness, and commit iniquity, they shall die for it.^b ¹⁹ And when the wicked turn from their wickedness, and do what is lawful and right, they shall live by it.^b ²⁰ Yet you say, "The way of the Lord is not just." O house of Israel, I will judge all of you according to your ways!

^a Heb *by it*

^b Heb *them*

The Fall of Jerusalem

21 In the twelfth year of our exile, in the tenth month, on the fifth day of the month, someone who had escaped from Jerusalem came to me and said, "The city has fallen."²² Now the hand of the LORD had been upon me the evening before the fugitive came; but he had opened my mouth by the time the fugitive came to me in the morning; so my mouth was opened, and I was no longer unable to speak.

The Survivors in Judah

23 The word of the LORD came to me:²⁴ Mortal, the inhabitants of these waste places in the land of Israel keep saying, "Abraham was only one man, yet he got possession of the land; but we are many; the land is surely given us to possess."²⁵ Therefore say to them, Thus says the Lord GOD: You eat flesh with the blood, and lift up your eyes to your idols, and shed blood; shall you then possess the land?²⁶ You depend on your swords, you commit abominations, and each of you defiles his neighbor's wife; shall you then possess the land?²⁷ Say this to them, Thus says the Lord GOD: As I live, surely those who are in the waste places shall fall by the sword;

and those who are in the open field I will give to the wild animals to be devoured; and those who are in strongholds and in caves shall die by pestilence.²⁸ I will make the land a desolation and a waste, and its proud might shall come to an end; and the mountains of Israel shall be so desolate that no one will pass through.²⁹ Then they shall know that I am the LORD, when I have made the land a desolation and a waste because of all their abominations that they have committed.

30 As for you, mortal, your people who talk together about you by the walls, and at the doors of the houses, say to one another, each to a neighbor, "Come and hear what the word is that comes from the LORD."³¹ They come to you as people come, and they sit before you as my people, and they hear your words, but they will not obey them. For flattery is on their lips, but their heart is set on their gain.³² To them you are like a singer of love songs,^a one who has a beautiful voice and plays well on an instrument; they hear what you say, but they will not do it.³³ When this comes—and come it will!—then they shall know that a prophet has been among them.

Israel's False Shepherds

34 The word of the LORD came to me:² Mortal, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel: prophesy, and say to them—to the shepherds: Thus says the Lord GOD: Ah, you shepherds of Israel who have been feeding yourselves! Should not shepherds feed the sheep?³ You eat the fat, you clothe yourselves with the wool, you slaughter the fatlings; but you do not feed the sheep.⁴ You have not strengthened the weak, you have not healed the sick, you have not bound up the injured, you have not brought back the strayed, you have not sought the lost, but with force and harshness you have ruled them.⁵ So they were scattered, because there was no shepherd; and scattered, they became food for all the wild animals.⁶ My sheep were scattered, they wandered over all the mountains and on every high hill; my sheep were scattered over all the face of the earth, with no one to search or seek for them.

⁷ Therefore, you shepherds, hear the word of the LORD:⁸ As I live, says the Lord GOD, because my sheep

^a Cn: Heb like a love song

Read Ezekiel 34

The shepherds symbolize kings in the ancient Near East. God is the good shepherd who will gather his scattered flock. There will be a new order for Israel. The emphasis on the covenant relationship, a covenant of peace, is paramount.

Reflect: When in positions of leadership we should act like the good shepherd, always being aware of our responsibilities to and for others.

Pray: Pray that we may be conscious of the presence of God among us, and act accordingly.

Act: Kindness toward others is consonant with the spirit of the covenant.

have become a prey, and my sheep have become food for all the wild animals, since there was no shepherd; and because my shepherds have not searched for my sheep, but the shepherds have fed themselves, and have not fed my sheep; ⁹ therefore, you shepherds, hear the word of the LORD: ¹⁰ Thus says the Lord GOD, I am against the shepherds; and I will demand my sheep at their hand, and put a stop to their feeding the sheep; no longer shall the shepherds feed themselves. I will rescue my sheep from their mouths, so that they may not be food for them.

God, the True Shepherd

11 For thus says the Lord GOD: I myself will search for my sheep, and will seek them out. ¹² As shepherds seek out their flocks when they are among their scattered sheep, so I will seek out my sheep. I will rescue them from all the places to which they have been scattered on a day of clouds and thick darkness. ¹³ I will bring them out from the peoples and gather them from the countries, and will bring them into their own land; and I will feed them on the mountains of Israel, by the watercourses, and in all the inhabited parts of the land. ¹⁴ I will feed them with good pasture, and the mountain heights of Israel shall be their pasture; there they shall lie down in good grazing land, and they shall feed on rich pasture on the mountains of Israel. ¹⁵ I myself will be the shepherd of my sheep, and I will make them lie down, says the Lord GOD. ¹⁶ I will seek the lost, and I will bring back the strayed, and I will bind up the injured, and I will strengthen the weak, but the fat and the strong I will destroy. I will feed them with justice.

17 As for you, my flock, thus says the Lord GOD: I shall judge between sheep and sheep, between rams and goats: ¹⁸ Is it not enough for you to feed on the good pasture, but you must tread down with your feet the rest of your pasture? When you drink of clear water, must you foul the rest with your feet? ¹⁹ And must my sheep eat what you have trodden with your feet, and drink what you have fouled with your feet?

20 Therefore, thus says the Lord GOD to them: I myself will judge between the fat sheep and the lean sheep. ²¹ Because you pushed with flank and shoulder, and butted at all the weak animals with your horns until you scattered them far and wide, ²² I will save my flock, and they shall no longer be ravaged; and I will judge between sheep and sheep.

23 I will set up over them one shepherd, my servant David, and he shall feed them: he shall feed them and be their shepherd. ²⁴ And I, the LORD, will be their God,

and my servant David shall be prince among them; I, the LORD, have spoken.

25 I will make with them a covenant of peace and banish wild animals from the land, so that they may live in the wild and sleep in the woods securely. 26 I will make them and the region around my hill a blessing; and I will send down the showers in their season; they shall be showers of blessing. 27 The trees of the field shall yield their fruit, and the earth shall yield its increase. They shall be secure on their soil; and they shall know that I am the LORD, when I break the bars of their yoke, and save them from

the hands of those who enslaved them. 28 They shall no more be plunder for the nations, nor shall the animals of the land devour them; they shall live in safety, and no one shall make them afraid. 29 I will provide for them a splendid vegetation so that they shall no more be consumed with hunger in the land, and no longer suffer the insults of the nations. 30 They shall know that I, the LORD their God, am with them, and that they, the house of Israel, are my people, says the Lord GOD. 31 You are my sheep, the sheep of my pasture^a and I am your God, says the Lord GOD.

Read Ezekiel 35

This is an oracle concerning the mountains of Edom and Israel. The prophet proclaims judgment against Edom, which, after the fall of Jerusalem, assisted the Chaldeans in destroying the land. Mt. Seir, east of the Arabah, may be equated with Edom. Concerning Israel and Judah, the glory (presence) of God will return.

Reflect: Never join forces with evil people who are bent on the destruction of others.

Pray: Pray that one day we may experience the new Jerusalem.

Act: Defuse, to the degree possible, enmity among friends and neighbors.

Judgment on Mount Seir

35 The word of the LORD came to me: ² Mortal, set your face against Mount Seir, and prophesy against it, ³ and say to it, Thus says the Lord GOD:

I am against you, Mount Seir;

I stretch out my hand against you
to make you a desolation and a waste.

⁴ I lay your towns in ruins;
you shall become a desolation,
and you shall know that I am the LORD.

⁵ Because you cherished an ancient enmity, and gave over the people of Israel to the power of the sword at the time of their calamity, at the time of their final punishment; ⁶ therefore, as I live, says the Lord GOD, I will prepare you for blood, and blood shall pursue you; since you did not hate bloodshed, bloodshed shall pursue you. ⁷ I will make Mount Seir a waste and a desolation; and I will cut off from it all who come and go. ⁸ I will fill its mountains with the slain; on your hills and in your valleys and in all your watercourses those killed with the sword shall fall. ⁹ I will make you a perpetual desolation, and your cities shall never be inhabited. Then you shall know that I am the LORD.

¹⁰ Because you said, “These two nations and these two countries shall be mine, and we will take possession of them,”—although the LORD was there—¹¹ therefore, as I live, says the Lord GOD, I will deal with you according to the anger and envy that you showed because of your hatred against them; and I will make myself known among you,^b when I judge you. ¹² You shall know that I, the LORD, have heard all the abusive speech that you uttered against the mountains of Israel, saying, “They are laid desolate, they are given us to devour.” ¹³ And you magnified yourselves against me with your mouth, and multiplied your words against me; I

^a Gk OL: Heb *pasture, you are people*

^b Gk: Heb *them*

heard it. ¹⁴ Thus says the Lord GOD: As the whole earth rejoices, I will make you desolate. ¹⁵ As you rejoiced over the inheritance of the house of Israel, because it was

desolate, so I will deal with you; you shall be desolate, Mount Seir, and all Edom, all of it. Then they shall know that I am the LORD.

Read Ezekiel 36

The mountains of Israel are highlands that represent all Israel. Henceforth the discourse concerns the restoration of Israel. A new creation is needed to liberate the Israelites from the bondage of sin and retribution.

Reflect: Reflect on the joy that comes with being on the side of God.

Pray: May we be conscious of the Lord making things new in our own lives.

Act: Our actions should always bear witness to our joy in the Lord.

Blessing on Israel

36 And you, mortal, prophesy to the mountains of Israel, and say: O mountains of Israel, hear the word of the LORD. ² Thus says the Lord GOD: Because the enemy said of you, “Aha!” and, “The ancient heights have become our possession,” ³ therefore prophesy, and say: Thus says the Lord GOD: Because they made you desolate indeed, and crushed you from all sides, so that you became the possession of the rest of the nations, and you became an object of gossip and slander among the people; ⁴ therefore, O mountains of Israel, hear the word of the Lord GOD: Thus says the Lord GOD to the mountains and the hills, the watercourses and the valleys, the desolate wastes and the deserted towns, which have become a source of plunder and an object of derision to the rest of the nations all around; ⁵ therefore thus says the Lord GOD: I am speaking in my hot jealousy against the rest of the nations, and against all Edom, who, with wholehearted joy and utter contempt, took my land as their possession, because of its pasture, to plunder it. ⁶ Therefore prophesy concerning the land of Israel, and say to the mountains and hills, to the watercourses and valleys, Thus says the Lord GOD: I am speaking in my jealous wrath, because you have suffered the insults of the nations; ⁷ therefore thus says the Lord GOD: I swear that the nations that are all around you shall themselves suffer insults.

⁸ But you, O mountains of Israel, shall shoot out your branches, and yield your fruit to my people Israel; for they shall soon come home. ⁹ See now, I am for you; I will turn to you, and you shall be tilled and sown; ¹⁰ and I will multiply your population, the whole house of Israel, all of it; the towns shall be inhabited and the waste places rebuilt; ¹¹ and I will multiply human beings and animals upon you. They shall increase and be fruitful; and I will cause you to be inhabited as in your former times, and will do more good to you than ever before. Then you shall know that I am the LORD. ¹² I will lead people upon you—my people Israel—and they shall possess you, and you shall be their inheritance. No longer shall you bereave them of children.

¹³ Thus says the Lord GOD: Because they say to you, “You devour people, and you bereave your nation of children,” ¹⁴ therefore you shall no longer devour people and no longer bereave your nation of children,

says the Lord GOD; ¹⁵ and no longer will I let you hear the insults of the nations, no longer shall you bear the disgrace of the peoples; and no longer shall you cause your nation to stumble, says the Lord GOD.

The Renewal of Israel

¹⁶ The word of the LORD came to me: ¹⁷ Mortal, when the house of Israel lived on their own soil, they defiled it with their ways and their deeds; their conduct in my sight was like the uncleanness of a woman in her menstrual period. ¹⁸ So I poured out my wrath upon them for the blood that they had shed upon the land, and for the idols with which they had defiled it. ¹⁹ I scattered them among the nations, and they were dispersed through the countries; in accordance with their conduct and their deeds I judged them. ²⁰ But when they came to the nations, wherever they came, they profaned my holy name, in that it was said of them, "These are the people of the LORD, and yet they had to go out of his land." ²¹ But I had concern for my holy name, which the house of Israel had profaned among the nations to which they came.

²² Therefore say to the house of Israel, Thus says the Lord GOD: It is not for your sake, O house of Israel, that I am about to act, but for the sake of my holy name, which you have profaned among the nations to which you came. ²³ I will sanctify my great name, which has been profaned among the nations, and which you have profaned among them; and the nations shall know that I am the LORD, says the Lord GOD, when through you I display my holiness before their eyes. ²⁴ I will take you from the nations, and gather you from all the countries, and bring you into your own land. ²⁵ I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses, and from all your idols I will cleanse you. ²⁶ A new heart I will give you,

and a new spirit I will put within you; and I will remove from your body the heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. ²⁷ I will put my spirit within you, and make you follow my statutes and be careful to observe my ordinances. ²⁸ Then you shall live in the land that I gave to your ancestors; and you shall be my people, and I will be your God. ²⁹ I will save you from all your uncleannesses, and I will summon the grain and make it abundant and lay no famine upon you. ³⁰ I will make the fruit of the tree and the produce of the field abundant, so that you may never again suffer the disgrace of famine among the nations. ³¹ Then you shall remember your evil ways, and your dealings that were not good; and you shall loathe yourselves for your iniquities and your abominable deeds. ³² It is not for your sake that I will act, says the Lord GOD; let that be known to you. Be ashamed and dismayed for your ways, O house of Israel.

³³ Thus says the Lord GOD: On the day that I cleanse you from all your iniquities, I will cause the towns to be inhabited, and the waste places shall be rebuilt. ³⁴ The land that was desolate shall be tilled, instead of being the desolation that it was in the sight of all who passed by. ³⁵ And they will say, "This land that was desolate has become like the garden of Eden; and the waste and desolate and ruined towns are now inhabited and fortified." ³⁶ Then the nations that are left all around you shall know that I, the LORD, have rebuilt the ruined places, and replanted that which was desolate; I, the LORD, have spoken, and I will do it.

³⁷ Thus says the Lord GOD: I will also let the house of Israel ask me to do this for them: to increase their population like a flock. ³⁸ Like the flock for sacrifices,^a like the flock at Jerusalem during her appointed festivals, so shall the ruined towns be filled with flocks of people. Then they shall know that I am the LORD.

^a Heb *flock of holy things*

Read Ezekiel 37

The book reaches its climax in this chapter: restoration will be permanent. The vision of the valley of the dry bones represents the Israelites in exile. The imagery is that of a battlefield full of dead warriors. Note that this chapter is not concerned with the doctrine of resurrection. Ezekiel is speaking of the resurrection of Israel from the grave of exile. The difference between life and death, according to Ezekiel, is to be found in the presence of God's spirit in our lives. The oracle of the two sticks envisions the reunification of the south and the north culminating in a united Israel ruled by one king. The prophet emphasizes the covenant relationship.

Reflect: Consider the fact that death is always followed by resurrection.

Pray: May we be open and willing to accept God's spirit in our lives.

Act: Act with confidence in God's power to fill us with his spirit.

The Valley of Dry Bones

37 The hand of the LORD came upon me, and he brought me out by the spirit of the LORD and set me down in the middle of a valley; it was full of bones. ² He led me all around them; there were very many lying in the valley, and they were very dry. ³ He said to me, "Mortal, can these bones live?" I answered, "O Lord GOD, you know." ⁴ Then he said to me, "Prophecy to these bones, and say to them: O dry bones, hear the word of the LORD. ⁵ Thus says the Lord GOD to these bones: I will cause breath^a to enter you, and you shall live. ⁶ I will lay sinews on you, and will cause flesh to come upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath^a in you, and you shall live; and you shall know that I am the LORD."

⁷ So I prophesied as I had been commanded; and as I prophesied, suddenly there was a noise, a rattling, and the bones came together, bone to its bone. ⁸ I looked, and there were sinews on them, and flesh had come upon them, and skin had covered them; but there was no breath in them. ⁹ Then he said to me, "Prophecy to the breath, prophesy, mortal, and say to the breath:^b Thus says the Lord GOD: Come from the four winds, O breath,^b and breathe upon these slain, that they may live." ¹⁰ I prophesied as he commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived, and stood on their feet, a vast multitude.

¹¹ Then he said to me, "Mortal, these bones are the whole house of Israel. They say, 'Our bones are dried up, and our hope is lost; we are cut off completely.' ¹² Therefore prophesy, and say to them, Thus says the Lord GOD: I am going to open your graves, and bring you up from your graves, O my people; and I will bring you back to the land of Israel. ¹³ And you shall know that I am the LORD, when I open your graves, and bring you up from your graves, O my people. ¹⁴ I will put my spirit within you, and you shall live, and I will place you on your own soil; then you shall know that I, the LORD, have spoken and will act, says the LORD."

The Two Sticks

¹⁵ The word of the LORD came to me: ¹⁶ Mortal, take a stick and write on it, "For Judah, and the Israelites associated with it"; then take another stick and write on it, "For Joseph (the stick of Ephraim) and all the house of Israel associated with it"; ¹⁷ and join them together into one stick, so that they may become one in your hand. ¹⁸ And when your people say to you, "Will you not show us what you mean by these?" ¹⁹ say to them, Thus says the Lord GOD: I am about to take the stick of Joseph

^a Or *spirit*

^b Or *wind* or *spirit*

(which is in the hand of Ephraim) and the tribes of Israel associated with it; and I will put the stick of Judah upon it,^a and make them one stick, in order that they may be one in my hand. ²⁰When the sticks on which you write are in your hand before their eyes, ²¹then say to them, Thus says the Lord GOD: I will take the people of Israel from the nations among which they have gone, and will gather them from every quarter, and bring them to their own land. ²²I will make them one nation in the land, on the mountains of Israel; and one king shall be king over them all. Never again shall they be two nations, and never again shall they be divided into two kingdoms. ²³They shall never again defile themselves with their idols and their detestable things, or with any of their transgressions. I will save them from all the apostasies into which they have fallen,^b and will cleanse

them. Then they shall be my people, and I will be their God.

²⁴My servant David shall be king over them; and they shall all have one shepherd. They shall follow my ordinances and be careful to observe my statutes. ²⁵They shall live in the land that I gave to my servant Jacob, in which your ancestors lived; they and their children and their children's children shall live there forever; and my servant David shall be their prince forever. ²⁶I will make a covenant of peace with them; it shall be an everlasting covenant with them; and I will bless^c them and multiply them, and will set my sanctuary among them forevermore. ²⁷My dwelling place shall be with them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. ²⁸Then the nations shall know that I the LORD sanctify Israel, when my sanctuary is among them forevermore.

Read Ezekiel 38–39

These two strange chapters present an apocalyptic vision having to do with Gog (a symbolic name), the ruler and general of Magog's forces. The chapters include a description of the imminent coming of a foe from the north against the Promised Land. Gog will be defeated and God's holy name will be established.

Reflect: Reflect on the meaning of apocalyptic visions in Ezekiel and elsewhere in the Bible.

Pray: Like the Israelites restored after the exile, we may rejoice in our own restored lives.

Act: Every day, act in the conviction that restoration follows exile for those who put their trust in God.

Invasion by Gog

38 The word of the LORD came to me: ²Mortal, set your face toward Gog, of the land of Magog, the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal. Prophesy against him ³and say: Thus says the Lord GOD: I am against you, O Gog, chief prince of Meshech and Tubal; ⁴I will turn you around and put hooks into your jaws, and I will lead you out with all your army, horses and horsemen, all of them clothed in full armor, a great company, all of them with shield and buckler, wielding swords. ⁵Persia, Ethiopia,^d and Put are with them, all of them with buckler and helmet; ⁶Gomer and all its troops; Beth-togarmah from the remotest parts of the north with all its troops—many peoples are with you.

⁷Be ready and keep ready, you and all the companies that are assembled around you, and hold yourselves in reserve for them. ⁸After many days you shall be mustered; in the latter years you shall go against a land restored from war, a land where people were gathered from many nations on the mountains of Israel, which had long lain waste; its people were brought out from the nations and now are living in safety, all of them. ⁹You shall advance, coming on like a storm; you shall be like a cloud covering the land, you and all your troops, and many peoples with you.

¹⁰Thus says the Lord GOD: On that day thoughts will come into your mind, and you will devise an evil

^a Heb *I will put them upon it*

^b Another reading is *from all the settlements in which they have sinned*

^c Tg: Heb *give*

^d Or *Nubia*; Heb *Cush*

scheme. ¹¹ You will say, “I will go up against the land of unwalled villages; I will fall upon the quiet people who live in safety, all of them living without walls, and having no bars or gates”; ¹² to seize spoil and carry off plunder; to assail the waste places that are now inhabited, and the people who were gathered from the nations, who are acquiring cattle and goods, who live at the center^a of the earth. ¹³ Sheba and Dedan and the merchants of Tarshish and all its young warriors^b will say to you, “Have you come to seize spoil? Have you assembled your horde to carry off plunder, to carry away silver and gold, to take away cattle and goods, to seize a great amount of booty?”

¹⁴ Therefore, mortal, prophesy, and say to Gog: Thus says the Lord GOD: On that day when my people Israel are living securely, you will rouse yourself^c ¹⁵ and come from your place out of the remotest parts of the north, you and many peoples with you, all of them riding on horses, a great horde, a mighty army; ¹⁶ you will come up against my people Israel, like a cloud covering the earth. In the latter days I will bring you against my land, so that the nations may know me, when through you, O Gog, I display my holiness before their eyes.

Judgment on Gog

¹⁷ Thus says the Lord GOD: Are you he of whom I spoke in former days by my servants the prophets of Israel, who in those days prophesied for years that I would bring you against them? ¹⁸ On that day, when Gog comes against the land of Israel, says the Lord GOD, my wrath shall be aroused. ¹⁹ For in my jealousy and in my blazing wrath I declare: On that day there shall be a great shaking in the land of Israel; ²⁰ the fish of the sea, and the birds of the air, and the animals of the field, and all creeping things that creep on the ground, and all human beings that are on the face of the earth, shall quake at my presence, and the mountains shall be thrown down, and the cliffs shall fall, and every wall shall tumble to the ground. ²¹ I will summon the sword against Gog^d in^e all my mountains, says the Lord GOD; the swords of all will be against their comrades. ²² With pestilence and bloodshed I will enter into judgment with him; and I will pour down torrential rains and hailstones, fire and sulfur, upon him and his troops and the many peoples that are with him. ²³ So I will display my greatness and my holiness and make myself known in the eyes of many nations. Then they shall know that I am the LORD.

Gog's Armies Destroyed

39 And you, mortal, prophesy against Gog, and say: Thus says the Lord GOD: I am against you, O Gog, chief prince of Meshech and Tubal! ² I will turn you around and drive you forward, and bring you up from the remotest parts of the north, and lead you against the mountains of Israel. ³ I will strike your bow from your left hand, and will make your arrows drop out of your right hand. ⁴ You shall fall on the mountains of Israel, you and all your troops and the peoples that are with you; I will give you to birds of prey of every kind and to the wild animals to be devoured. ⁵ You shall fall in the open field; for I have spoken, says the Lord GOD. ⁶ I will send fire on Magog and on those who live securely in the coastlands; and they shall know that I am the LORD.

⁷ My holy name I will make known among my people Israel; and I will not let my holy name be profaned any more; and the nations shall know that I am the

^a Heb *navel*

^b Heb *young lions*

^c Gk: Heb *will you not know?*

^d Heb *him*

^e Heb *to or for*

LORD, the Holy One in Israel. ⁸ It has come! It has happened, says the Lord GOD. This is the day of which I have spoken.

⁹ Then those who live in the towns of Israel will go out and make fires of the weapons and burn them—bucklers and shields, bows and arrows, handpikes and spears—and they will make fires of them for seven years. ¹⁰ They will not need to take wood out of the field or cut down any trees in the forests; they will make their fires of the weapons; they will despoil those who despoiled them, and plunder those who plundered them, says the Lord GOD.

The Burial of Gog

¹¹ On that day I will give to Gog a place for burial in Israel, the Valley of the Travelers^a east of the sea; it shall block the path of the travelers, for there Gog and all his horde will be buried; it shall be called the Valley of Hamon-gog.^b ¹² Seven months the house of Israel shall spend burying them, in order to cleanse the land. ¹³ All the people of the land shall bury them; and it will bring them honor on the day that I show my glory, says the Lord GOD. ¹⁴ They will set apart men to pass through the land regularly and bury any invaders^c who remain on the face of the land, so as to cleanse it; for seven months they shall make their search. ¹⁵ As the searchers^c pass through the land, anyone who sees a human bone shall set up a sign by it, until the buriers have buried it in the Valley of Hamon-gog.^b ¹⁶ (A city Hamonah^d is there also.) Thus they shall cleanse the land.

¹⁷ As for you, mortal, thus says the Lord GOD: Speak to the birds of every kind and to all the wild animals: Assemble and come, gather from all around to the sacrificial feast that I am preparing for you, a great sacrificial feast on the mountains of Israel, and you shall eat flesh and drink blood. ¹⁸ You shall eat the flesh of the

mighty, and drink the blood of the princes of the earth—of rams, of lambs, and of goats, of bulls, all of them fatlings of Bashan. ¹⁹ You shall eat fat until you are filled, and drink blood until you are drunk, at the sacrificial feast that I am preparing for you. ²⁰ And you shall be filled at my table with horses and charioteers,^e with warriors and all kinds of soldiers, says the Lord GOD.

Israel Restored to the Land

²¹ I will display my glory among the nations; and all the nations shall see my judgment that I have executed, and my hand that I have laid on them. ²² The house of Israel shall know that I am the LORD their God, from that day forward. ²³ And the nations shall know that the house of Israel went into captivity for their iniquity, because they dealt treacherously with me. So I hid my face from them and gave them into the hand of their adversaries, and they all fell by the sword. ²⁴ I dealt with them according to their uncleanness and their transgressions, and hid my face from them.

²⁵ Therefore thus says the Lord GOD: Now I will restore the fortunes of Jacob, and have mercy on the whole house of Israel; and I will be jealous for my holy name. ²⁶ They shall forget^f their shame, and all the treachery they have practiced against me, when they live securely in their land with no one to make them afraid, ²⁷ when I have brought them back from the peoples and gathered them from their enemies' lands, and through them have displayed my holiness in the sight of many nations. ²⁸ Then they shall know that I am the LORD their God because I sent them into exile among the nations, and then gathered them into their own land. I will leave none of them behind; ²⁹ and I will never again hide my face from them, when I pour out my spirit upon the house of Israel, says the Lord GOD.

^a Or of the Abarim

^b That is, the Horde of Gog

^c Heb travelers

^d That is The Horde

^e Heb chariots

^f Another reading is They shall bear

Read Ezekiel 40

Chapters 40–43 deal with the restored temple and the new Israel. New land boundaries will circumscribe the holiness of the land and people. Chapters 40–48 give an idealized picture, often referred to as a utopian vision. The new temple is modeled on that built by Solomon. The three divisions of the temple building are: the vestibule, the nave, and holy of holies (inner sanctuary).

Reflect: Reflect on the joy that awaits us, as it did the Israelites, in the new temple.

Pray: Pray that someday we too may be admitted to the new temple.

Act: Resolve to make your life conform to everything that the restored temple signifies.

The Vision of the New Temple

40 In the twenty-fifth year of our exile, at the beginning of the year, on the tenth day of the month, in the fourteenth year after the city was struck down, on that very day, the hand of the LORD was upon me, and he brought me there. ² He brought me, in visions of God, to the land of Israel, and set me down upon a very high mountain, on which was a structure like a city to the south. ³ When he brought me there, a man was there, whose appearance shone like bronze, with a linen cord and a measuring reed in his hand; and he was standing in the gateway. ⁴ The man said to me, “Mortal, look closely and listen attentively, and set your mind upon all that I shall show you, for you were brought here in order that I might show it to you; declare all that you see to the house of Israel.”

⁵ Now there was a wall all around the outside of the temple area. The length of the measuring reed in the man’s hand was six long cubits, each being a cubit and a handbreadth in length; so he measured the thickness of the wall, one reed; and the height, one reed. ⁶ Then he went into the gateway facing east, going up its steps, and measured the threshold of the gate, one reed deep.^a There were ⁷ recesses, and each recess was one reed wide and one reed deep; and the space between the recesses, five cubits; and the threshold of the gate by the vestibule of the gate at the inner end was one reed deep. ⁸ Then he measured the inner vestibule of the gateway, one cubit. ⁹ Then he measured the vestibule of the gateway, eight cubits; and its pilasters, two cubits; and the vestibule of the gate was at the inner end. ¹⁰ There were three recesses on either side of the east gate; the three were of the same size; and the pilasters on either side were of the same size. ¹¹ Then he measured the width of the opening of the gateway, ten cubits; and the width of the gateway, thirteen cubits. ¹² There was a barrier before the recesses, one cubit on either side; and the recesses were six cubits on either side. ¹³ Then he measured the gate from the back^b of the one recess to the back^b of the other, a width of twenty-five cubits, from wall to wall.^c ¹⁴ He measured^d also the vestibule, twenty cubits; and the gate next to the pilaster on every side of the court.^e ¹⁵ From the front of the gate at the entrance to the end of the inner vestibule of the gate was fifty cubits. ¹⁶ The recesses and their pilasters had windows, with shutters^e on the inside of the gateway all around, and the vestibules also had windows on the inside all around; and on the pilasters were palm trees.

¹⁷ Then he brought me into the outer court; there were chambers there, and a pavement, all around the

^a Heb *deep, and one threshold, one reed deep*

^b Gk: Heb *roof*

^c Heb *opening facing opening*

^d Heb *made*

^e Meaning of Heb uncertain

court; thirty chambers fronted on the pavement. ¹⁸ The pavement ran along the side of the gates, corresponding to the length of the gates; this was the lower pavement. ¹⁹ Then he measured the distance from the inner front of^a the lower gate to the outer front of the inner court, one hundred cubits.^b

²⁰ Then he measured the gate of the outer court that faced north—its depth and width. ²¹ Its recesses, three on either side, and its pilasters and its vestibule were of the same size as those of the first gate; its depth was fifty cubits, and its width twenty-five cubits. ²² Its windows, its vestibule, and its palm trees were of the same size as those of the gate that faced toward the east. Seven steps led up to it; and its vestibule was on the inside.^c ²³ Opposite the gate on the north, as on the east, was a gate to the inner court; he measured from gate to gate, one hundred cubits.

²⁴ Then he led me toward the south, and there was a gate on the south; and he measured its pilasters and its vestibule; they had the same dimensions as the others. ²⁵ There were windows all around in it and in its vestibule, like the windows of the others; its depth was fifty cubits, and its width twenty-five cubits. ²⁶ There were seven steps leading up to it; its vestibule was on the inside.^c It had palm trees on its pilasters, one on either side. ²⁷ There was a gate on the south of the inner court; and he measured from gate to gate toward the south, one hundred cubits.

²⁸ Then he brought me to the inner court by the south gate, and he measured the south gate; it was of the same dimensions as the others. ²⁹ Its recesses, its pilasters, and its vestibule were of the same size as the others; and there were windows all around in it and in its vestibule; its depth was fifty cubits, and its width twenty-five cubits. ³⁰ There were vestibules all around, twenty-five cubits deep and five cubits

wide. ³¹ Its vestibule faced the outer court, and palm trees were on its pilasters, and its stairway had eight steps.

³² Then he brought me to the inner court on the east side, and he measured the gate; it was of the same size as the others. ³³ Its recesses, its pilasters, and its vestibule were of the same dimensions as the others; and there were windows all around in it and in its vestibule; its depth was fifty cubits, and its width twenty-five cubits. ³⁴ Its vestibule faced the outer court, and it had palm trees on its pilasters, on either side; and its stairway had eight steps.

³⁵ Then he brought me to the north gate, and he measured it; it had the same dimensions as the others. ³⁶ Its recesses, its pilasters, and its vestibule were of the same size as the others;^d and it had windows all around. Its depth was fifty cubits, and its width twenty-five cubits. ³⁷ Its vestibule^e faced the outer court, and it had palm trees on its pilasters, on either side; and its stairway had eight steps.

³⁸ There was a chamber with its door in the vestibule of the gate,^f where the burnt offering was to be washed. ³⁹ And in the vestibule of the gate were two tables on either side, on which the burnt offering and the sin offering and the guilt offering were to be slaughtered. ⁴⁰ On the outside of the vestibule^g at the entrance of the north gate were two tables; and on the other side of the vestibule of the gate were two tables. ⁴¹ Four tables were on the inside, and four tables on the outside of the side of the gate, eight tables, on which the sacrifices were to be slaughtered. ⁴² There were also four tables of hewn stone for the burnt offering, a cubit and a half long, and one cubit and a half wide, and one cubit high, on which the instruments were to be laid with which the burnt offerings and the sacrifices were slaughtered. ⁴³ There were pegs, one hand-breadth long, fastened all around the in-

^a Compare Gk: Heb *from before*

^b Heb adds *the east and the north*

^c Gk: Heb *before them*

^d One Ms: Compare verses 29 and 33: MT lacks *were of the same size as the others*

^e Gk Vg Compare verses 26, 31, 34: Heb *pillars*

^f Cn: Heb *at the pilasters of the gates*

^g Cn: Heb *to him who goes up*

side. And on the tables the flesh of the offering was to be laid.

44 On the outside of the inner gateway there were chambers for the singers in the inner court, one^a at the side of the north gate facing south, the other at the side of the east gate facing north. 45 He said to me, “This chamber that faces south is for the priests who have charge of the temple, 46 and the chamber that faces north is for the priests who have charge of the altar; these are the descendants of Zadok, who alone among the descendants of Levi may come near to the LORD to minister to him.” 47 He measured the court, one hundred cu-

bits deep, and one hundred cubits wide, a square; and the altar was in front of the temple.

The Temple

48 Then he brought me to the vestibule of the temple and measured the pilasters of the vestibule, five cubits on either side; and the width of the gate was fourteen cubits; and the sidewalls of the gate were three cubits^b on either side. 49 The depth of the vestibule was twenty cubits, and the width twelve^c cubits; ten steps led up^d to it; and there were pillars beside the pilasters on either side.

Read Ezekiel 41

This chapter describes the annex and surroundings of the temple, as well as the wall decorations and the interior furnishings. There are three stories with thirty rooms, each room abutting the exterior wall. A wooden altar is located in the nave.

Reflect: Reflect on the implications of the temple in the life of the believer.

Pray: In our own lives, may we witness God’s holiness.

Act: May we act as living temples of the Lord.

41 Then he brought me to the nave, and measured the pilasters; on each side six cubits was the width of the pilasters.^e 2 The width of the entrance was ten cubits; and the sidewalls of the entrance were five cubits on either side. He measured the length of the nave, forty cubits, and its width, twenty cubits. 3 Then he went into the inner room and measured the pilasters of the entrance, two cubits; and the width of the entrance, six cubits; and the sidewalls^f of the entrance, seven cubits. 4 He measured the depth of the room, twenty cubits, and its width, twenty cubits, beyond the nave. And he said to me, This is the most holy place.

5 Then he measured the wall of the temple, six cubits thick; and the width of the side chambers, four cubits, all around the temple. 6 The side chambers were in three stories, one over another, thirty in each story. There were offsets^g all around the wall of the temple to serve as supports for the side chambers, so that they should not be supported by the wall of the temple. 7 The passageway^h of the side chambers widened from story to story; for the structure was supplied with a stairway all around the temple. For this reason the structure became wider from story to story. One ascended from the bottom story to the uppermost story by way of the middle one. 8 I saw also that the temple had a raised platform all around; the foundations of the side chambers measured a full reed of six long cubits. 9 The thickness of the outer wall of the side chambers was five cubits; and the free space between the side chambers of the temple 10 and the chambers of the court was a width of twenty cubits all around the temple on every side. 11 The side chambers opened onto the area left free, one door toward the north, and another door toward the south; and the width of the part

^a Heb lacks one

^b Gk: Heb *and the width of the gate was three cubits*

^c Gk: Heb *eleven*

^d Gk: Heb *and by steps that went up*

^e Compare Gk: Heb *ten*

^f Gk: Heb *width*

^g Gk Compare 1 Kings 6.6: Heb *they entered*

^h Cn: Heb *it was surrounded*

that was left free was five cubits all around.

12 The building that was facing the temple yard on the west side was seventy cubits wide; and the wall of the building was five cubits thick all around, and its depth ninety cubits.

13 Then he measured the temple, one hundred cubits deep; and the yard and the building with its walls, one hundred cubits deep; ¹⁴ also the width of the east front of the temple and the yard, one hundred cubits.

15 Then he measured the depth of the building facing the yard at the west, together with its galleries^a on either side, one hundred cubits.

The nave of the temple and the inner room and the outer^b vestibule ¹⁶ were paneled,^c and, all around, all three had windows with recessed^d frames. Facing the threshold the temple was paneled with wood all around, from the floor up to the windows (now the windows were covered), ¹⁷ to the space above the door, even to the inner room, and on the outside. And on all the walls all around in the inner room and the

nave there was a pattern.^e ¹⁸ It was formed of cherubim and palm trees, a palm tree between cherub and cherub. Each cherub had two faces: ¹⁹ a human face turned toward the palm tree on the one side, and the face of a young lion turned toward the palm tree on the other side. They were carved on the whole temple all around; ²⁰ from the floor to the area above the door, cherubim and palm trees were carved on the wall.^f

21 The doorposts of the nave were square. In front of the holy place was something resembling ²² an altar of wood, three cubits high, two cubits long, and two cubits wide;^g its corners, its base,^h and its walls were of wood. He said to me, "This is the table that stands before the LORD."²³ The nave and the holy place had each a double door. ²⁴ The doors had two leaves apiece, two swinging leaves for each door. ²⁵ On the doors of the nave were carved cherubim and palm trees, such as were carved on the walls; and there was a canopy of wood in front of the vestibule outside. ²⁶ And there were recessed windows and palm trees on either side, on the sidewalls of the vestibule.ⁱ

The Holy Chambers and the Outer Wall

42 Then he led me out into the outer court, toward the north, and he brought me to the chambers that were opposite the temple yard and opposite the building on the north. ² The length of the building that was on the north side^j was^k one hundred cubits, and the width fifty cubits. ³ Across the twenty cubits that belonged to the inner court, and facing the pavement that belonged to the outer court, the chambers rose^l gallery^m by gallery^m in three stories. ⁴ In front of the chambers was a passage on the inner side, ten cubits wide and one hundred cubits deep,ⁿ and its^o entrances were on the north. ⁵ Now the upper chambers were narrower, for the galleries^m took more away from them than from the lower and middle chambers in the building. ⁶ For they were in three stories, and they had no pillars like the pillars of the outer^p court; for this reason the upper chambers were set back from the ground more than the lower and the middle ones. ⁷ There was a wall outside parallel to the chambers, toward the outer court, opposite the chambers, fifty cubits long. ⁸ For the chambers on the outer court were fifty cubits long, while those op-

^a Cn: Meaning of Heb uncertain

^b Gk: Heb *of the court*

^c Gk: Heb *the thresholds*

^d Cn Compare Gk 1 Kings 6.4: Meaning of Heb uncertain

^e Heb *measures*

^f Cn Compare verse 25: Heb *and the wall*

^g Gk: Heb *lacks two cubits wide*

^h Gk: Heb *length*

ⁱ Cn: Heb *vestibule. And the side chambers of the temple and the canopies*

^j Gk: Heb *door*

^k Gk: Heb *before the length*

^l Heb *lacks the chambers rose*

^m Meaning of Heb uncertain

ⁿ Gk Syr: Heb *a way of one cubit*

^o Heb *their*

^p Gk: Heb *lacks outer*

Read Ezekiel 42–43

The text of these chapters is problematic. It deals principally with the architecture of the temple area and the purpose of the wall that defined a boundary between the holy and the common, the sacred and the profane. The glory of the Lord has returned to the temple and Ezekiel provides instructions about the purpose of the temple. Ezekiel envisions a priestly community and a renewed worship.

Reflect: What does the holiness of God really mean in biblical terminology?

Pray: Borrowing the words of the prophet Isaiah, pray fervently: “Holy, holy, holy.”

Act: Act in the spirit of the holy God.

posite the temple were one hundred cubits long.⁹ At the foot of these chambers ran a passage that one entered from the east in order to enter them from the outer court.¹⁰ The width of the passage^a was fixed by the wall of the court.

On the south^b also, opposite the vacant area and opposite the building, there were chambers¹¹ with a passage in front of them; they were similar to the chambers on the north, of the same length and width, with the same exits^c and arrangements and doors.¹² So the entrances of the chambers to the south were entered through the entrance at the head of the corresponding passage, from the east, along the matching wall.^d

13 Then he said to me, “The north chambers and the south chambers opposite the vacant area are the holy chambers, where the priests who approach the LORD shall eat the most holy offerings; there they shall deposit the most holy offerings—the grain offering, the sin offering, and the guilt offering—for the place is holy.¹⁴ When the priests enter the holy place, they shall not go out of it into the outer court without laying there the vestments in which they minister, for these are holy; they shall put on other garments before they go near to the area open to the people.”

15 When he had finished measuring the interior of the temple area, he led me out by the gate that faces east, and measured the temple area all around.¹⁶ He measured the east side with the measuring reed, five hundred cubits by the measuring reed.¹⁷ Then he turned and measured^e the north side, five hundred cubits by the measuring reed.¹⁸ Then he turned and measured^e the south side, five hundred cubits by the measuring reed.¹⁹ Then he turned to the west side and measured, five hundred cubits by the measuring reed.²⁰ He measured it on the four sides. It had a wall around it, five hundred cubits long and five hundred cubits wide, to make a separation between the holy and the common.

The Divine Glory Returns to the Temple

43 Then he brought me to the gate, the gate facing east.² And there, the glory of the God of Israel was coming from the east; the sound was like the sound of mighty waters; and the earth shone with his glory.³ The^f vision I saw was like the vision that I had seen when he came to destroy the city, and^g like the vision that I had seen by the river Chebar; and I fell upon my face.⁴ As the glory of the LORD entered the temple by the gate facing east,⁵ the spirit lifted me up, and brought me into the inner court; and the glory of the LORD filled the temple.

^a Heb lacks *of the passage*

^b Gk: Heb east

^c Heb *and all their exits*

^d Meaning of Heb uncertain

^e Gk: Heb *measuring reed all around. He measured*

^f Gk: Heb *like the vision*

^g Syr: Heb *and the visions*

6 While the man was standing beside me, I heard someone speaking to me out of the temple. ⁷ He said to me: Mortal, this is the place of my throne and the place for the soles of my feet, where I will reside among the people of Israel forever. The house of Israel shall no more defile my holy name, neither they nor their kings, by their whoring, and by the corpses of their kings at their death.^a ⁸ When they placed their threshold by my threshold and their doorposts beside my doorposts, with only a wall between me and them, they were defiling my holy name by their abominations that they committed; therefore I have consumed them in my anger. ⁹ Now let them put away their idolatry and the corpses of their kings far from me, and I will reside among them forever.

¹⁰ As for you, mortal, describe the temple to the house of Israel, and let them measure the pattern; and let them be ashamed of their iniquities. ¹¹ When they are ashamed of all that they have done, make known to them the plan of the temple, its arrangement, its exits and its entrances, and its whole form—all its ordinances and its entire plan and all its laws; and write it down in their sight, so that they may observe and follow the entire plan and all its ordinances. ¹² This is the law of the temple: the whole territory on the top of the mountain all around shall be most holy. This is the law of the temple.

The Altar

¹³ These are the dimensions of the altar by cubits (the cubit being one cubit and a handbreadth): its base shall be one cubit high,^b and one cubit wide, with a rim of one span around its edge. This shall be the height of the altar: ¹⁴ From the base on the ground to the lower ledge, two cubits, with a width of one cubit; and from the smaller ledge to the larger ledge, four cubits, with a

width of one cubit; ¹⁵ and the altar hearth, four cubits; and from the altar hearth projecting upward, four horns. ¹⁶ The altar hearth shall be square, twelve cubits long by twelve wide. ¹⁷ The ledge also shall be square, fourteen cubits long by fourteen wide, with a rim around it half a cubit wide, and its surrounding base, one cubit. Its steps shall face east.

¹⁸ Then he said to me: Mortal, thus says the Lord GOD: These are the ordinances for the altar: On the day when it is erected for offering burnt offerings upon it and for dashing blood against it, ¹⁹ you shall give to the levitical priests of the family of Zadok, who draw near to me to minister to me, says the Lord GOD, a bull for a sin offering. ²⁰ And you shall take some of its blood, and put it on the four horns of the altar, and on the four corners of the ledge, and upon the rim all around; thus you shall purify it and make atonement for it. ²¹ You shall also take the bull of the sin offering, and it shall be burnt in the appointed place belonging to the temple, outside the sacred area.

²² On the second day you shall offer a male goat without blemish for a sin offering; and the altar shall be purified, as it was purified with the bull. ²³ When you have finished purifying it, you shall offer a bull without blemish and a ram from the flock without blemish. ²⁴ You shall present them before the LORD, and the priests shall throw salt on them and offer them up as a burnt offering to the LORD. ²⁵ For seven days you shall provide daily a goat for a sin offering; also a bull and a ram from the flock, without blemish, shall be provided. ²⁶ Seven days shall they make atonement for the altar and cleanse it, and so consecrate it. ²⁷ When these days are over, then from the eighth day onward the priests shall offer upon the altar your burnt offerings and your offerings of well-being; and I will accept you, says the Lord GOD.

^a Or on their high places

^b Gk: Heb lacks high

Read Ezekiel 44

Temple ordinances are presented for Levites and the priests. The past failures of the priesthood must be redressed. Henceforth the the Levites ("outsiders") will perform only menial service. Holiness is conceived of as something physical, hence communicable.

Reflect: Reflect on the worthiness required of those who participate in the temple worship, especially priests and Levites.

Pray: We pray that we may develop greater understanding of what it means to be holy.

Act: Act in a way that is commensurate with innate respect for the divine presence.

The Closed Gate

44 Then he brought me back to the outer gate of the sanctuary, which faces east; and it was shut. ² The LORD said to me: This gate shall remain shut; it shall not be opened, and no one shall enter by it; for the LORD, the God of Israel, has entered by it; therefore it shall remain shut. ³ Only the prince, because he is a prince, may sit in it to eat food before the LORD; he shall enter by way of the vestibule of the gate, and shall go out by the same way.

Admission to the Temple

⁴ Then he brought me by way of the north gate to the front of the temple; and I looked, and lo! the glory of the LORD filled the temple of the LORD; and I fell upon my face. ⁵ The LORD said to me: Mortal, mark well, look closely, and listen attentively to all that I shall tell you concerning all the ordinances of the temple of the LORD and all its laws; and mark well those who may be admitted to^a the temple and all those who are to be excluded from the sanctuary. ⁶ Say to the rebellious house,^b to the house of Israel, Thus says the Lord GOD: O house of Israel, let there be an end to all your abominations ⁷ in admitting foreigners, uncircumcised in heart and flesh, to be in my sanctuary, profaning my temple when you offer to me my food, the fat and the blood. You^c have broken my covenant with all your abominations. ⁸ And you have not kept charge of my sacred offerings; but you have appointed foreigners^d to act for you in keeping my charge in my sanctuary.

⁹ Thus says the Lord GOD: No foreigner, uncircumcised in heart and flesh, of all the foreigners who are among the people of Israel, shall enter my sanctuary. ¹⁰ But the Levites who went far from me, going astray from me after their idols when Israel went astray, shall bear their punishment. ¹¹ They shall be ministers in my sanctuary, having oversight at the gates of the temple, and serving in the temple; they shall slaughter the burnt offering and the sacrifice for the people, and they shall attend on them and serve them. ¹² Because they ministered to them before their idols and made the house of Israel stumble into iniquity, therefore I have sworn concerning them, says the Lord GOD, that they shall bear their punishment. ¹³ They shall not come near to me, to serve me as priest, nor come near any of my sacred offerings, the things that are most sacred; but they shall bear their shame, and the consequences of the abominations that they have committed. ¹⁴ Yet I will appoint them to keep charge of the temple, to do all its chores, all that is to be done in it.

^a Cn: Heb *the entrance of*

^b Gk: Heb *lacks house*

^c Gk Syr Vg: Heb *They*

^d Heb *lacks foreigners*

The Levitical Priests

15 But the levitical priests, the descendants of Zadok, who kept the charge of my sanctuary when the people of Israel went astray from me, shall come near to me to minister to me; and they shall attend me to offer me the fat and the blood, says the Lord GOD. ¹⁶ It is they who shall enter my sanctuary, it is they who shall approach my table, to minister to me, and they shall keep my charge. ¹⁷ When they enter the gates of the inner court, they shall wear linen vestments; they shall have nothing of wool on them, while they minister at the gates of the inner court, and within. ¹⁸ They shall have linen turbans on their heads, and linen undergarments on their loins; they shall not bind themselves with anything that causes sweat. ¹⁹ When they go out into the outer court to the people, they shall remove the vestments in which they have been ministering, and lay them in the holy chambers; and they shall put on other garments, so that they may not communicate holiness to the people with their vestments. ²⁰ They shall not shave their heads or let their locks grow long; they shall only trim the hair of their heads. ²¹ No priest shall drink wine when he enters the inner court. ²² They shall not marry a widow, or a divorced woman, but only a virgin of the stock of the house of Israel, or a widow who is the widow of a priest. ²³ They shall teach

my people the difference between the holy and the common, and show them how to distinguish between the unclean and the clean. ²⁴ In a controversy they shall act as judges, and they shall decide it according to my judgments. They shall keep my laws and my statutes regarding all my appointed festivals, and they shall keep my sabbaths holy. ²⁵ They shall not defile themselves by going near to a dead person; for father or mother, however, and for son or daughter, and for brother or unmarried sister they may defile themselves. ²⁶ After he has become clean, they shall count seven days for him. ²⁷ On the day that he goes into the holy place, into the inner court, to minister in the holy place, he shall offer his sin offering, says the Lord GOD.

²⁸ This shall be their inheritance: I am their inheritance; and you shall give them no holding in Israel; I am their holding. ²⁹ They shall eat the grain offering, the sin offering, and the guilt offering; and every devoted thing in Israel shall be theirs. ³⁰ The first of all the first fruits of all kinds, and every offering of all kinds from all your offerings, shall belong to the priests; you shall also give to the priests the first of your dough, in order that a blessing may rest on your house. ³¹ The priests shall not eat of anything, whether bird or animal, that died of itself or was torn by animals.

The Holy District

45 When you allot the land as an inheritance, you shall set aside for the LORD a portion of the land as a holy district, twenty-five thousand cubits long and twenty^a thousand cubits wide; it shall be holy throughout its entire extent. ² Of this, a square plot of five hundred by five hundred cubits shall be for the sanctuary, with fifty cubits for an open space around it. ³ In the holy district you shall measure off a section twenty-five thousand cubits long and ten thousand wide, in which shall be the sanctuary, the most holy place. ⁴ It shall be a holy portion of the land; it shall be for the priests, who minister in the sanctuary and approach the LORD to minister to him; and it shall be both a place for their houses and a holy place for the sanctuary. ⁵ Another section, twenty-five thousand cubits long and ten thou-

^a Gk: Heb ten

Read Ezekiel 45

This chapter concerns the sacred tract of land. The distribution of the land is idealized. Weights and measures for offerings are prescribed, as are the festival regulations concerning Passover, the feast of Booths (Tabernacles), and the Day of Atonement. There is a cautionary word about royal avarice and dishonesty in business transactions.

Reflect: Reflect upon our own observance of holy days.

Pray: Pray that we always be aware of the holiness of both places and things.

Act: In our business relationships, let us act with honesty.

sand cubits wide, shall be for the Levites who minister at the temple, as their holding for cities to live in.^a

6 Alongside the portion set apart as the holy district you shall assign as a holding for the city an area five thousand cubits wide, and twenty-five thousand cubits long; it shall belong to the whole house of Israel.

7 And to the prince shall belong the land on both sides of the holy district and the holding of the city, alongside the holy district and the holding of the city, on the west and on the east, corresponding in length to one of the tribal portions, and extending from the western to the eastern boundary ⁸ of the land. It is to be his property in Israel. And my princes shall no longer oppress my people; but they shall let the house of Israel have the land according to their tribes.

9 Thus says the Lord GOD: Enough, O princes of Israel! Put away violence and oppression, and do what is just and right. Cease your evictions of my people, says the Lord GOD.

Weights and Measures

10 You shall have honest balances, an honest ephah, and an honest bath.^b ¹¹ The ephah and the bath shall be of the same measure, the bath containing one-tenth of a homer, and the ephah one-tenth of a homer; the homer shall be the standard measure. ¹² The shekel shall be twenty gerahs. Twenty shekels, twenty-five shekels, and fifteen shekels shall make a mina for you.

Offerings

13 This is the offering that you shall make: one-sixth of an ephah from each homer of wheat, and one-sixth of an ephah from each homer of barley, ¹⁴ and as the fixed portion of oil,^c one-tenth of a bath from each cor (the cor,^d like the homer, contains ten baths); ¹⁵ and one sheep from every flock of two hundred, from the pastures of Israel. This is the offering for grain offerings, burnt offerings, and offerings of well-being, to make atonement for them, says the Lord GOD. ¹⁶ All the people of the land shall join with the prince in Israel in making this offering. ¹⁷ But this shall be the obligation of the prince regarding the burnt offerings, grain offerings, and drink offerings, at the festivals, the new moons, and the sabbaths, all the appointed festivals of the house of Israel: he shall provide the sin offerings, grain offerings, the burnt offerings, and the offerings of well-being, to make atonement for the house of Israel.

Festivals

18 Thus says the Lord GOD: In the first month, on the first day of the month, you shall take a young bull with-

^a Gk: Heb as *their holding*, *twenty chambers*

^b A Heb measure of volume

^c Cn: Heb *oil*, *the bath the oil*

^d Vg: Heb *homer*

out blemish, and purify the sanctuary. ¹⁹ The priest shall take some of the blood of the sin offering and put it on the doorposts of the temple, the four corners of the ledge of the altar, and the posts of the gate of the inner court. ²⁰ You shall do the same on the seventh day of the month for anyone who has sinned through error or ignorance; so you shall make atonement for the temple.

²¹ In the first month, on the fourteenth day of the month, you shall celebrate the festival of the passover, and for seven days unleavened bread shall be eaten. ²² On that day the prince shall provide for himself and

all the people of the land a young bull for a sin offering. ²³ And during the seven days of the festival he shall provide as a burnt offering to the LORD seven young bulls and seven rams without blemish, on each of the seven days; and a male goat daily for a sin offering. ²⁴ He shall provide as a grain offering an ephah for each bull, an ephah for each ram, and a hin of oil to each ephah. ²⁵ In the seventh month, on the fifteenth day of the month and for the seven days of the festival, he shall make the same provision for sin offerings, burnt offerings, and grain offerings, and for the oil.

Read Ezekiel 46

This chapter consists of ritual laws. Reference is made to the prince's offering and the sacrificial kitchens where foodstuffs are prepared in the name of the people.

Reflect: Consider the importance of ritual when preparing food on behalf of others.

Pray: May we be given a deeper understanding of the somewhat mechanical regulations expressed in this chapter.

Act: Let us act with propriety in our communal gestures of worship.

Miscellaneous Regulations

46 Thus says the Lord GOD: The gate of the inner court that faces east shall remain closed on the six working days; but on the sabbath day it shall be opened and on the day of the new moon it shall be opened. ² The prince shall enter by the vestibule of the gate from outside, and shall take his stand by the post of the gate. The priests shall offer his burnt offering and his offerings of well-being, and he shall bow down at the threshold of the gate. Then he shall go out, but the gate shall not be closed until evening. ³ The people of the land shall bow down at the entrance of that gate before the LORD on the sabbaths and on the new moons. ⁴ The burnt offering that the prince offers to the LORD on the sabbath day shall be six lambs without blemish and a ram without blemish; ⁵ and the grain offering with the ram shall be an ephah, and the grain offering with the lambs shall be as much as he wishes to give, together with a hin of oil to each ephah. ⁶ On the day of the new moon he shall offer a young bull without blemish, and six lambs and a ram, which shall be without blemish; ⁷ as a grain offering he shall provide an ephah with the bull and an ephah with the ram, and with the lambs as much as he wishes, together with a hin of oil to each ephah. ⁸ When the prince enters, he shall come in by the vestibule of the gate, and he shall go out by the same way.

⁹ When the people of the land come before the LORD at the appointed festivals, whoever enters by the north gate to worship shall go out by the south gate; and whoever enters by the south gate shall go out by the north gate: they shall not return by way of the gate by which they entered, but shall go out straight ahead. ¹⁰ When they come in, the prince shall come in with them; and when they go out, he shall go out.

11 At the festivals and the appointed seasons the grain offering with a young bull shall be an ephah, and with a ram an ephah, and with the lambs as much as one wishes to give, together with a hin of oil to an ephah. ¹² When the prince provides a freewill offering, either a burnt offering or offerings of well-being as a freewill offering to the LORD, the gate facing east shall be opened for him; and he shall offer his burnt offering or his offerings of well-being as he does on the sabbath day. Then he shall go out, and after he has gone out the gate shall be closed.

13 He shall provide a lamb, a yearling, without blemish, for a burnt offering to the LORD daily; morning by morning he shall provide it. ¹⁴ And he shall provide a grain offering with it morning by morning regularly, one-sixth of an ephah, and one-third of a hin of oil to moisten the choice flour, as a grain offering to the LORD; this is the ordinance for all time. ¹⁵ Thus the lamb and the grain offering and the oil shall be provided, morning by morning, as a regular burnt offering.

16 Thus says the Lord GOD: If the prince makes a gift to any of his sons out of his inheritance,^a it shall belong to his sons, it is their holding by inheritance. ¹⁷ But if he makes a gift out of his inheritance to one of his servants, it shall be his to the year of

liberty; then it shall revert to the prince; only his sons may keep a gift from his inheritance. ¹⁸ The prince shall not take any of the inheritance of the people, thrusting them out of their holding; he shall give his sons their inheritance out of his own holding, so that none of my people shall be dispossessed of their holding.

19 Then he brought me through the entrance, which was at the side of the gate, to the north row of the holy chambers for the priests; and there I saw a place at the extreme western end of them. ²⁰ He said to me, "This is the place where the priests shall boil the guilt offering and the sin offering, and where they shall bake the grain offering, in order not to bring them out into the outer court and so communicate holiness to the people."

21 Then he brought me out to the outer court, and led me past the four corners of the court; and in each corner of the court there was a court—²² in the four corners of the court were small^b courts, forty cubits long and thirty wide; the four were of the same size. ²³ On the inside, around each of the four courts^c was a row of masonry, with hearths made at the bottom of the rows all around. ²⁴ Then he said to me, "These are the kitchens where those who serve at the temple shall boil the sacrifices of the people."

Water Flowing from the Temple

47 Then he brought me back to the entrance of the temple; there, water was flowing from below the threshold of the temple toward the east (for the temple faced east); and the water was flowing down from below the south end of the threshold of the temple, south of the altar. ² Then he brought me out by way of the north gate, and led me around on the outside to the outer gate that faces toward the east;^d and the water was coming out on the south side.

3 Going on eastward with a cord in his hand, the man measured one thousand cubits, and then led me through the water; and it was ankle-deep. ⁴ Again he measured one thousand, and led me through the water; and it was knee-deep. Again he measured one thousand, and led me through the water; and it was up to the waist. ⁵ Again he measured one thousand, and it was a

^a Gk: Heb it is his inheritance

^b Gk Syr Vg: Meaning of Heb uncertain

^c Heb the four of them

^d Meaning of Heb uncertain

Read Ezekiel 47–48

Yahweh is making a fresh start in Israel. Water imagery dominates these chapters. Water is a friendly element, symbolizing redemption and abundant blessing. The water issuing from beneath the temple is the water of life; it rejuvenates the land, making it a new paradise. The new Jerusalem receives a new name: “The LORD is There,” the great theme of Ezekiel.

Reflect: Reflect on the importance of water to sustain life.

Pray: May we truly appreciate the fact that the presence of God makes the difference between life and death.

Act: Act with certainty that “The LORD is There.”

river that I could not cross, for the water had risen; it was deep enough to swim in, a river that could not be crossed. ⁶ He said to me, “Mortal, have you seen this?”

Then he led me back along the bank of the river. ⁷ As I came back, I saw on the bank of the river a great many trees on the one side and on the other. ⁸ He said to me, “This water flows toward the eastern region and goes down into the Arabah; and when it enters the sea, the sea of stagnant waters, the water will become fresh. ⁹ Wherever the river goes,^a every living creature that swarms will live, and there will be very many fish, once these waters reach there. It will become fresh; and everything will live where the river goes. ¹⁰ People will stand fishing beside the sea^b from En-ge-di to En-eglaim; it will be a place for the spreading of nets; its fish will be of a great many kinds, like the fish of the Great Sea. ¹¹ But its swamps and marshes will not become fresh; they are to be left for salt. ¹² On the banks, on both sides of the river, there will grow all kinds of trees for food. Their leaves will not wither nor their fruit fail, but they will bear fresh fruit every month, because the water for them flows from the sanctuary. Their fruit will be for food, and their leaves for healing.”

The New Boundaries of the Land

¹³ Thus says the Lord GOD: These are the boundaries by which you shall divide the land for inheritance among the twelve tribes of Israel. Joseph shall have two portions. ¹⁴ You shall divide it equally; I swore to give it to your ancestors, and this land shall fall to you as your inheritance.

¹⁵ This shall be the boundary of the land: On the north side, from the Great Sea by way of Hethlon to Lebo-hamath, and on to Zedad,^c ¹⁶ Berothah, Sibraim (which lies between the border of Damascus and the border of Hamath), as far as Hazer-hatticon, which is on the border of Hauran. ¹⁷ So the boundary shall run from the sea to Hazar-enon, which is north of the border of Damascus, with the border of Hamath to the north.^d This shall be the north side.

¹⁸ On the east side, between Hauran and Damascus; along the Jordan between Gilead and the land of Israel; to the eastern sea and as far as Tamar.^e This shall be the east side.

¹⁹ On the south side, it shall run from Tamar as far as the waters of Meribath-kadesh, from there along the Wadi of Egypt^f to the Great Sea. This shall be the south side.

²⁰ On the west side, the Great Sea shall be the boundary to a point opposite Lebo-hamath. This shall be the west side.

^a Gk Syr Vg Tg: Heb *the two rivers go*

^b Heb *it*

^c Gk: Heb *Lebo-zedad*, ¹⁶ *Hamath*

^d Meaning of Heb uncertain

^e Compare Syr: Heb *you shall measure*

^f Heb lacks of *Egypt*

21 So you shall divide this land among you according to the tribes of Israel. 22 You shall allot it as an inheritance for yourselves and for the aliens who reside among you and have begotten children among you.

They shall be to you as citizens of Israel; with you they shall be allotted an inheritance among the tribes of Israel. 23 In whatever tribe aliens reside, there you shall assign them their inheritance, says the Lord GOD.

The Tribal Portions

48 These are the names of the tribes: Beginning at the northern border, on the Hethlon road,^a from Lebo-hamath, as far as Hazar-enon (which is on the border of Damascus, with Hamath to the north), and^b extending from the east side to the west,^c Dan, one portion. ² Adjoining the territory of Dan, from the east side to the west, Asher, one portion. ³ Adjoining the territory of Asher, from the east side to the west, Naphtali, one portion. ⁴ Adjoining the territory of Naphtali, from the east side to the west, Manasseh, one portion. ⁵ Adjoining the territory of Manasseh, from the east side to the west, Ephraim, one portion. ⁶ Adjoining the territory of Ephraim, from the east side to the west, Reuben, one portion. ⁷ Adjoining the territory of Reuben, from the east side to the west, Judah, one portion.

⁸ Adjoining the territory of Judah, from the east side to the west, shall be the portion that you shall set apart, twenty-five thousand cubits in width, and in length equal to one of the tribal portions, from the east side to the west, with the sanctuary in the middle of it. ⁹ The portion that you shall set apart for the LORD shall be twenty-five thousand cubits in length, and twenty^d thousand in width. ¹⁰ These shall be the allotments of the holy portion: the priests shall have an allotment measuring twenty-five thousand cubits on the northern side, ten thousand cubits in width on the western side, ten thousand in width on the eastern side, and twenty-five thousand in length on the southern side, with the sanctuary of the LORD in the middle of it. ¹¹ This shall be for the consecrated priests, the descendants^e of Zadok, who kept my charge, who did not go astray when the people of Israel went astray, as the Levites did. ¹² It shall belong to them as a special portion from the holy portion of the land, a most holy place, adjoining the territory of the Levites. ¹³ Alongside the territory of the priests, the Levites shall have an allotment twenty-five thousand cubits in length and ten thousand in width. The whole length shall be twenty-five thousand cubits and the width twenty^f thousand. ¹⁴ They shall not sell or exchange any of it; they shall not transfer this choice portion of the land, for it is holy to the LORD.

¹⁵ The remainder, five thousand cubits in width and twenty-five thousand in length, shall be for ordinary use

^a Compare 47.15: Heb *by the side of the way*

^b Cn: Heb *and they shall be his*

^c Gk Compare verses 2-8: Heb *the east side the west*

^d Compare 45.1: Heb *ten*

^e One Ms Gk: Heb *of the descendants*

^f Gk: Heb *ten*

for the city, for dwellings and for open country. In the middle of it shall be the city; ¹⁶ and these shall be its dimensions: the north side four thousand five hundred cubits, the south side four thousand five hundred, the east side four thousand five hundred, and the west side four thousand five hundred. ¹⁷ The city shall have open land: on the north two hundred fifty cubits, on the south two hundred fifty, on the east two hundred fifty, on the west two hundred fifty. ¹⁸ The remainder of the length alongside the holy portion shall be ten thousand cubits to the east, and ten thousand to the west, and it shall be alongside the holy portion. Its produce shall be food for the workers of the city. ¹⁹ The workers of the city, from all the tribes of Israel, shall cultivate it. ²⁰ The whole portion that you shall set apart shall be twenty-five thousand cubits square, that is, the holy portion together with the property of the city.

²¹ What remains on both sides of the holy portion and of the property of the city shall belong to the prince. Extending from the twenty-five thousand cubits of the holy portion to the east border, and westward from the twenty-five thousand cubits to the west border, parallel to the tribal portions, it shall belong to the prince. The holy portion with the sanctuary of the temple in the middle of it, ²² and the property of the Levites and of the city, shall be in the middle of that which belongs to the prince. The portion of the prince shall lie between the territory of Judah and the territory of Benjamin.

²³ As for the rest of the tribes: from the

east side to the west, Benjamin, one portion. ²⁴ Adjoining the territory of Benjamin, from the east side to the west, Simeon, one portion. ²⁵ Adjoining the territory of Simeon, from the east side to the west, Issachar, one portion. ²⁶ Adjoining the territory of Issachar, from the east side to the west, Zebulun, one portion. ²⁷ Adjoining the territory of Zebulun, from the east side to the west, Gad, one portion. ²⁸ And adjoining the territory of Gad to the south, the boundary shall run from Tamar to the waters of Meribath-kadesh, from there along the Wadi of Egypt^a to the Great Sea. ²⁹ This is the land that you shall allot as an inheritance among the tribes of Israel, and these are their portions, says the Lord GOD.

³⁰ These shall be the exits of the city: On the north side, which is to be four thousand five hundred cubits by measure, ³¹ three gates, the gate of Reuben, the gate of Judah, and the gate of Levi, the gates of the city being named after the tribes of Israel. ³² On the east side, which is to be four thousand five hundred cubits, three gates, the gate of Joseph, the gate of Benjamin, and the gate of Dan. ³³ On the south side, which is to be four thousand five hundred cubits by measure, three gates, the gate of Simeon, the gate of Issachar, and the gate of Zebulun. ³⁴ On the west side, which is to be four thousand five hundred cubits, three gates,^b the gate of Gad, the gate of Asher, and the gate of Naphtali. ³⁵ The circumference of the city shall be eighteen thousand cubits. And the name of the city from that time on shall be, The LORD is There.

^a Heb lacks of *Egypt*

^b One Ms Gk Syr: MT *their gates three*

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