

Ezekiel 16 - The Allegory of the Unfaithful Wife; The Everlasting Covenant; The Relationship Stages Between God & Israel

I. Imminent judgment upon Judah (Ezek 1:1—24:27)

- (2) Prophecies of coming judgment against Judah and Jerusalem (Ezek 4:1—24:27)
 - (B) Shattering false securities (Ezek 12:1—19:14)
 - (g) Seventh false security: Jerusalem (16:1-63)
 - (i) Jerusalem was an unwanted baby (16:1-5)
 - (ii) God rescued, reared and married the baby (16:6-14)
 - (iii) God's wife became an adulteress (16:15-34)
 - (iv) God will punish his adulterous wife (16:35-43)
 - (v) God's adulterous wife is worse than Samaria and Sodom (16:44-52)
 - (vi) God will restore his adulterous wife (16:53-63)

The Allegory of the Unfaithful Wife

Ezek 16 holds significant importance in understanding God's relationship to Israel. In this chapter, God recalls Israel's origins and infancy (v1-5). He describes how He chose the nation and united her to Him through marriage. This marital bond earned Israel the title "Yahweh's wife" (v6-14). However, Israel played the harlot (v15-34), and it became necessary to punish her by means of dispersion (v35-43). This punishment was justified, as Israel's sins surpassed those of Sodom and Samaria (v44-52), which receive a promise of salvation (v53-59). Yet, Israel's dispersion is not final, for there will be a future restoration on the basis of the Land Covenant (v60-63).

Allegory or Parable?

This overview of Ezekiel 16 shows that the chapter builds on the allegory of the unfaithful wife. There are four primary distinctions between allegories and parables:

1. Parables typically have a singular purpose or point, while allegories often convey multiple points.
2. Parables are grounded in reality, drawing from familiar experiences. For instance, Ezekiel's audience understood the existence of wild forest vines and their utility for firewood. Allegories, on the other hand, need not be true to life.

3. Parables function as extended similes, using "as" or "like" to compare things, while allegories unfold as narratives.
4. Parables commonly employ the past tense, while allegories frequently incorporate a mix of tenses.

Should Ezekiel 16 be Rated R?

Due to its explicit content, some rabbis decided that this chapter should not be read or translated in public. But despite its harsh allegorical nature and its title as "the passage of rebuke," Ezek 16 is still a part of the inspired Word of God. While its content may be challenging and uncomfortable, the chapter holds profound truths and insights about the consequences of disobedience, God's relationship with His people, and the depth of His mercy and grace. Therefore, Ezek 16 deserves careful study and exposition like any other Scripture.

Ezekiel 16

- (g) Seventh false security: Jerusalem (16:1-63)
 - (i) Jerusalem was an unwanted baby (16:1-5)

- 1 Then the word of the LORD came to me, saying,
- 1 Then the word of the LORD came to me, saying,
- 1 This message came to me from the LORD:
- 1 Again the word of the LORD came unto me, saying,
 - The series of prophecies that God gave to Ezekiel continue (began in Ezek 12)...
 - Since this phrase does not appear again until 17:1, 16:1-63 is one cohesive unit, with a unified message and theme: the allegory of the unfaithful wife.
- 2 "Son of man, make known to Jerusalem her abominations,
- 2 "Son of man, make known to Jerusalem her abominations
- 2 "Son of Man, make known to Israel her detestable practices.
- 2 Son of man, cause Jerusalem to know her abominations,
 - The purpose of this allegory is to cause Jerusalem to know her abominations
 - Jerusalem serves as a representative for the entire nation in this allegory, but while not every aspect described in this allegory applies directly to both Jerusalem and the nation as a whole, collectively they depict truths applicable to both [Fruchtenbaum]
- 3 and say, 'This is what the Lord GOD says to Jerusalem: "Your origin and your birth are from the land of the Canaanite; **your father was an Amorite and your mother a Hittite.**
- 3 and say, 'Thus says the Lord GOD to Jerusalem, "Your origin and your birth are from the land of the Canaanite, your father was an Amorite and your mother a Hittite.

3 You are to declare, 'This is what the Lord GOD says to Jerusalem: "Your birth place was the territory that belonged to the Canaanites. Your father was an Ammonite and your mother was a Hittite.

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

- Verses 3-5 deal with the circumstances surrounding Jerusalem's "birth"...

— The city's genealogy was that her birthplace were in "the land of the Canaanite." While it is true that Jerusalem is situated in Canaan, this phrase emphasizes the moral context rather than the geographical location.

- "...your father was an Amorite and your mother a Hittite" - these two people groups occupied Canaan during the patriarchal period (Amorites: Cf. Gen 10:16; 15:16; Num 13:29; Joshua 5:1; 7:7; 10:5; 24:15,18; Amos 2:10; Hittites: Gen 15:20; Num 13:29; Joshua 1:4).

4 As for your birth, on the day you were born your navel cord was not cut, nor were you washed with water for cleansing; you were not rubbed with salt or even wrapped in cloths.

4 As for your birth, on the day you were born your navel cord was not cut, nor were you washed with water for cleansing; you were not rubbed with salt or even wrapped in cloths.

4 Now as to your birth, on the day you were born your umbilical cord wasn't cut. You weren't washed with water to clean you, and nobody rubbed you with salt. And it's certain that you weren't wrapped in strips of cloth.

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

- Jerusalem is depicted as an abandoned baby at her birth...

— The city's "naval cord was not cut" which is a condition, if not remedied, would lead to death once the placenta ceased to function

— The city was also not "washed with water" or "rubbed with salt." Rubbing a baby with salt is a tradition that persists in the Middle East, which is supposed to firm up the skin and provide cleansing, much like water.

— The city was also not "wrapped in cloths"—it was left exposed and uncared for, indicating a deliberate neglect that eventually led to her demise

5 No eye looked with pity on you to do any of these things for you, to have compassion on you. Rather you were thrown out into the open field, for you were abhorred on the day you were born.

5 No eye looked with pity on you to do any of these things for you, to have compassion on you. Rather you were thrown out into the open field, for you were abhorred on the day you were born.

5 Nobody pitied you to do any of these things for you, and nobody showed you any compassion. You were tossed outside on the ground, because you were detested from the day you were born.

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

- This abandoned, newborn city was left without mercy. Instead, Jerusalem was "thrown out into the open field" to perish because she was abhorred on the day she was born.

— In antiquity when newborns were left to die, it was typically because they were female or, if male, because of a birth defect

— In this allegory, Israel is pictured as Yahweh's wife, thus infant Jerusalem—the city and the nation in pre-patriarchal and patriarchal periods respectively—was abandoned at birth like an unwanted baby girl

(ii) God rescued, reared and married the baby (16:6-14)

After describing Israel's origin and infancy (v1-5), v6-14 recount how God chose the nation and made her His wife.

6 "When I **passed by you** and saw you squirming in your blood, I said to you *while you were in your blood*, 'Live!' Yes, I said to you *while you were in your blood*, 'Live!'

6 "When I passed by you and saw you squirming in your blood, I said to you *while you were in your blood*, 'Live!' Yes, I said to you *while you were in your blood*, 'Live!'

6 "When I passed by you, I saw you kicking around, covered in your own blood. That's when I told you, 'Live!'—while you were wallowing in your blood. I commanded you to live, even as you lay there in your own blood.

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

- "...I passed by you" - 2x in this passage (v6,8). This phrase divides God's response to the abandoned child into two parts: v6-7 describe His immediate reaction in order to preserve and increase the nation, while v8-14 record a later rescue and "glorification of Israel"

— As God passed by the first time, He saw the infant Israel squirming in her own blood.

Unlike others who looked upon the baby with indifference, He had compassion and issued a decree for the baby to live

— Historically, this decree was fulfilled during the patriarchal period, when the nation faced the threat of extinction due to famine. God raised up Joseph to rescue Israel, ensuring her survival (Gen 47:13-27; 50:19-20).

7 I made you very numerous, like plants of the field. Then you grew up, **became tall** and reached **the age for fine jewelry**; **your breasts were formed and your hair had grown**. Yet you were naked and bare.

7 I made you numerous like plants of the field. Then you grew up, became tall and reached the age for fine ornaments; **your breasts were formed and your hair had grown**. Yet you were naked and bare.

7 I made you increase like sprouting grain in the field. As a result, you multiplied greatly. Eventually, you reached the age when young women start wearing jewelry. Your breasts were formed, your hair had grown, but you were still bare and naked."'"

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

- Next He describes the baby's growth...He personally caused the nation to multiply, in spite of spending 40 years in the wilderness

— He describes Israel's condition while in Egypt: somewhat untamed, but still flourishing (Cf. Ex 1:7; Acts 7:17)

- "...became tall" - *galal*, means "to grow up" or "to become great"; here is likely refers to both maturity and exaltation

- "...the age for fine jewelry" - *dî dâyîm*, literally means "ornament of ornaments"; Israel's beauty also increased

- "...breasts were formed and your hair had grown" - Israel also reached sexual maturity

- Yet despite these positive developments, Israel remained "naked and bare." The historical context of this statement is the fact that the Israelites lacked wealth as slaves in Egypt.

During their time in bondage, they experienced oppression and poverty.

— Furthermore, there was no distinct national culture or cultural advancement in Egypt. Therefore, the verse likely describes the period from the death of Joseph until the time of Moses.

God's Betrothal to Jerusalem

8 "Then I passed by you and saw you, and behold, you were at the time for **love**; so I **spread My garment over you** and covered your nakedness. I also swore an oath to you and **entered into a covenant with you** so that you became Mine," declares the Lord GOD.

8 "Then I passed by you and saw you, and behold, you were at the time for love; so I spread My skirt over you and covered your nakedness. I also swore to you and entered into a covenant with you so that you became Mine," declares the Lord GOD.

8 "When I passed by you again, I looked at you, and noticed that it was your proper time for love. I spread my cloak over you to cover your nakedness. I made a solemn promise to you and entered into a covenant with you," declares the Lord GOD. "You belong to me.

8 Now when I passed by thee, and looked upon thee, behold, thy time was the time of love; and I spread my skirt over thee, and covered thy nakedness: yea,

- The references here apply to the time of the Exodus...

— As God "passed by" He took notice of Israel in a more unique way (Cf. Ex 2:24-25):

24 So God heard their groaning; and God remembered His covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

25 And God saw the sons of Israel, and **God took notice of them.**

— As a covenant-keeping God, He could not abandon His children in Egypt, and the "time for love" had come for Israel

- "...love" - *dod*, means "beloved," "love," or "uncle"; among the various Hebrew words for "love" this one specifically refers to romantic/sexual love and is often used in a marriage context (Cf. Prov 7:18; Song 4:10; 7:12-13)

- "...I spread My garment over you" - this gesture symbolized espousal and marriage (Cf. Ruth 3:9)

- "...entered into a covenant with you" - particularly referring to the Mosaic Covenant established at Sinai (Ex 19:5-6; 24:8; Deut 5:1-3)

— God considered the Mosaic Covenant as akin to a marriage contract; thus, Israel became the wife of Yahweh (Cf. Jer 2:2; 3:1-18; Hosea 1:1—3:5)

Verses 9-14 describe the beautification and exaltation of Israel, the bride...

9 "Then I bathed you with water, washed off your blood from you, and anointed you with oil.

9 "Then I bathed you with water, washed off your blood from you and anointed you with oil.

9 I bathed you with water, rinsed your own blood from you, and anointed you with oil.

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

- God personally washed Israel with water, washed off the blood, before anointing the nation with oil

— The Husband Himself bathing the wife expressed profound devotion and care

10 I also clothed you with colorfully woven cloth and put sandals of fine leather on your feet; and I wrapped you with fine linen and covered you with silk.

10 I also clothed you with embroidered cloth and put sandals of porpoise skin on your feet; and I wrapped you with fine linen and covered you with silk.

10 Then I covered you with embroidered clothing, clothed your feet with leather sandals, wrapped you with fine linen, and dressed you in silk.

10 I clothed thee also with broidered work, and shod thee with badgers' skin, and I girded thee about with fine linen, and I covered thee with silk.

- Then He clothed Israel with colorfully woven clothes, dressing her in the finest and costliest attire typically reserved for either the priesthood or royalty

11 I adorned you with **jewelry**, put **bracelets** on your wrists, and a necklace around your neck.

11 I adorned you with ornaments, put bracelets on your hands and a necklace around your neck.

11 I adorned you with jewels, placing bracelets on your hand and necklaces on your neck.

11 I decked thee also with ornaments, and I put bracelets upon thy hands, and a chain on thy neck.

- God bestowed gifts of fine jewelry to His wife...

- "...jewelry" - symbolizes the words of the Torah

- "...bracelets" - a reference to the Ten Commandments

12 I also put a **ring in your nose**, **earrings** in your ears, and a **beautiful crown** on your head.

12 I also put a ring in your nostril, earrings in your ears and a beautiful crown on your head.

12 I put a ring in your nose, earrings in your ears, and a crown encrusted with jewels on your head.

12 And I put a jewel on thy forehead, and earrings in thine ears, and a beautiful crown upon thine head.

- "...ring in your nose" - according to Jewish rabbis, this symbolizes the Ark of the Covenant

- "...earrings" - a reference to the cloud of God's glory (Shekinah)

- "...beautiful crown" - represents the guiding angel in the wilderness (Cf. Micah 2:13)

— Whether the rabbinic interpretations are accurate or not, these gifts of jewelry were fit for a princess about to marry a king (Cf. Gen 24:47)

13 So you were adorned with gold and silver, and your dress was of fine linen, silk, and colorfully woven cloth. You ate fine flour, honey, and oil; so you were exceedingly beautiful and advanced to royalty.

13 Thus you were adorned with gold and silver, and your dress was of fine linen, silk and embroidered cloth. You ate fine flour, honey and oil; so you were exceedingly beautiful and advanced to royalty.

13 You were adorned with gold, silver, clothing of fine linen, silk, and embroidery. You ate food made from the finest flour, honey, and olive oil. You were exceedingly beautiful, attaining royal status.

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

- Describes Israel's wealth during the reigns of David and Solomon, when the nation had the status of an empire (Cf. Hosea 2:8)

14 Then your fame spread among the nations on account of your beauty, for it was perfect because of My splendor which I bestowed on you," declares the Lord GOD.

14 Then your fame went forth among the nations on account of your beauty, for it was perfect because of My splendor which I bestowed on you," declares the Lord GOD.

14 Your fame spread throughout the nations because of your beauty. You were perfectly beautiful due to my splendor with which I endowed you," declares the Lord GOD.

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

- Describes Israel's reputation in the sight of other nations; her beauty was renowned among the nations

— During that time, Israel had become "perfect"—not because of any inherent qualities within herself but because of God's majesty. Everything was a result of what God had done for her.

Summary of v6-14: Israel was rescued by God, became His wife, and bestowed upon her magnificent gifts and elevated her status.

(iii) God's wife became an adulteress (16:15-34)

15 "But **you trusted in your beauty** and **became unfaithful** because of your fame, and **you poured out your obscene practices** on every passer-by to whom it might be *tempting*.

15 "But you trusted in your beauty and played the harlot because of your fame, and you poured out your harlotries on every passer-by who might be *willing*.

15 "But you trusted in your beauty. You did what whores do, as a result of your fame. You passed out your sexual favors to anyone who passed by, giving yourself to anyone.

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

- "...you trusted in your beauty" - the downfall of the wife into unfaithfulness was due to her trusting in her own beauty. She forgot entirely that her attractiveness was not inherent to

her, but due to what God had done for her.

- She started believing that she no longer needed to rely on her divine Husband, that her beauty could navigate her through any situation
- "...became unfaithful" - if Ezekiel would've ended the story at v14, it would have been a captivating tale of transformation from poverty to riches, a beautiful rags-to-riches love story
- However, in v15-34, Ezekiel aligns the allegory to the present reality in Israel: the wife of Yahweh had become unfaithful
- "...you poured out your obscene practices" - relying on her beauty, she began to engage in promiscuous behavior (Cf. Jer 3:2)
- What is interesting, which only Ezekiel brings out, is that typically prostitutes are paid for their services. Yet in this context, it was Israel, the wife of Yahweh, who made all the payments for her adulterous relationships.

16 You took some of your clothes, made for yourself **high places of various colors**, and committed prostitution on them, *which* should not come about nor happen.

16 You took some of your clothes, made for yourself high places of various colors and played the harlot on them, which should never come about nor happen.

16 You took some of your clothes and made gaily-colored high places and prostituted yourself all around them—something which had never happened before nor will ever happen again.

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

- These payments (v15) were the very gifts that God had given to His wife
- The nature of Israel's adultery was idolatry. She used the garments that God had given her to fashion "high places" (idolatrous worship centers, Lev 26:30)
- "...high places of various colors" - *bamot teluot*, literally "multicolored high places" is explained in 2 Kings 23:7
- Israel set up the idolatrous centers through the land and adorned images of idols with the very garments that God had given her

17 You also took your beautiful jewels *made of My* gold and of **My** silver, which I had given you, and made for yourself male images so that you might commit prostitution with them.

17 You also took your beautiful jewels *made of My* gold and of **My** silver, which I had given you, and made for yourself male images that you might play the harlot with them.

17 "You also took your fine jewelry—including my gold and my silver that I had given you. Then you made for yourself male images and had sex with them!"

17 Thou hast also taken thy fair jewels of my gold and of my silver, which I had given thee, and madest to thyself images of men, and didst commit whoredom with them,
- "...My" [2x] - notice the personal pronoun God uses to reiterate that these were *His* belongings

— However, Israel used these gifts that God had given to her to pay off those with whom she committed adultery. She melted down the precious jewelry given to her by her Husband and recast it into images of men.

— These were the *teraphim* or household gods, fashioned in the form of men (Cf. Gen 31:19,34,35; 2 Kings 23:24; Hosea 3:4)

18 Then you took your colorfully woven cloth and covered them, and offered My oil and My incense before them.

18 Then you took your embroidered cloth and covered them, and offered My oil and My incense before them.

18 You took your embroidered gowns and made clothes to cover them. Then you offered my olive oil and incense to them.

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

- Israel also handed her the beautiful broidered, multicolored wedding garments she had received as part of her bridal payment, to her idols

— Jer 10:8-9 echoes this scene, describing how the Israelites used to dress their gold statues in blue and purple. This practice highlights the absurdity of idolatry: the maker of the god gets to clothe his god himself.

— In addition, Israel placed the oil and incense belonging to her Husband before these idols rather than offering them back to Him

19 Also My bread which I gave you, fine flour, oil, and honey with which I fed you, you would offer before them for a soothing aroma; so it happened," declares the Lord GOD.

19 Also My bread which I gave you, fine flour, oil and honey with which I fed you, you would offer before them for a soothing aroma; so it happened," declares the Lord GOD.

19 "Not only that, you took the food I gave you—my fine flour, olive oil, and honey with which I fed you, and you offered them to those gods in order to appease them. That's exactly what happened," says the Lord GOD.

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

- Even the food items provided by God were used to present as offerings to idols

— Honey was forbidden as an offering under the Mosaic Law (Lev 2:11), but Israel set these things, including honey, before her gods as a sweet savor offering

20 "Furthermore, you took your sons and daughters whom you had borne to Me and sacrificed them to idols to be devoured. **Were your obscene practices a trivial matter?**

20 "Moreover, you took your sons and daughters whom you had borne to Me and sacrificed them to idols to be devoured. Were your harlotries so small a matter?

20 "Then you took your sons and daughters whom you bore for me and sacrificed them for your idols to eat. As though your prostitutions were an insignificant thing,

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

- If all of the above was not bad enough, Israel also descended into the abhorrent practice of human sacrifice

- It's clear in this verse that Israel's offspring belonged to God, as her Husband. Deut 6 describes Israel's duty to raise up godly children, and create environments that allowed their children to inquire about and learn spiritual truths as they matured.

- Israel's children were to be taught about God, not sacrificed to idols

- "...sacrificed" - *zabach*, the primary word to describe the slaughter of sacrificial animals in the Levitical system (Cf. Lev 17:5)

- "...Were your obscene practices a trivial matter?" - in other words, "Was your prostitution not enough? Did God's wife really need to descend into the ultimate idolatrous crime, the sacrificing of your children?

21 You slaughtered My children and offered them to idols by making them pass through *the fire*.

21 You slaughtered My children and offered them up to idols by causing them to pass through *the fire*.

21 you also slaughtered my sons and offered them to idols, incinerating them in fire.

21 That thou hast slain my children, and delivered them to cause them to pass through the fire for them?

- The children were killed first, then their bodies were placed on the idol's altar, "making them pass through the fire"

- With the introduction of the god Moloch into Israel's array of idols, the connotation shifted toward idolatry, particularly as human sacrifice became prevalent

- This practice was explicitly forbidden to any Jew (Lev 18:21). Nevertheless, it became common in the waning days of the Judean kingdom (Cf. 2 Kings 16:3; 21:6; 23:10; 2 Chr 28:3; 33:6; Jer 7:31-32; 19:1-15; 32:35).

Moloch Worship

- Child sacrifice: Cf. Ezek 20:26; 23:37-39; Ex 22:29; Judges 11:39; 2 Kings 16:3; 21:6; 23:10; Jer 7:31; 19:5; 32:35.
- Never wholly ceased as long as the monarchy of Judah lasted: 2 Kings 16:3; Ps 106:37; Is 57:5; Jer 7:32; 19:5; Micah 6:7; Lev 18:21; 20:2.

22 And besides all your abominations and obscene practices, you did not remember the days of your youth, when you were naked and bare and squirming in your blood.

22 Besides all your abominations and harlotries you did not remember the days of your youth, when you were naked and bare and squirming in your blood.

22 Throughout all of your detestable practices and immorality, you never did remember your earlier life when you were bare, naked, and wallowing in your own blood."

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

- The consequence of their abhorrent idolatry is that they had completely forgotten their history. They failed to recall the days of her youth when she was naked and bare, covered in her own blood.

— Her own mother shamefully abandoned her, and now she was rejecting (and killing) her own offspring

The Unfaithfulness of God's People

23 "Then it came about after all your wickedness ('Woe, woe to you!' declares the Lord GOD),

23 "Then it came about after all your wickedness ('Woe, woe to you!' declares the Lord GOD),

23 "How terrible! How terrible it will be for all of your wickedness!" declares the Lord GOD.

23 And it came to pass after all thy wickedness, (woe, woe unto thee! saith the Lord GOD;)

- God met Israel's wickedness with a stern admonition

24 that you built yourself a shrine and made yourself a high place in every public square.

24 that you built yourself a shrine and made yourself a high place in every square.

24 "You built raised mounds and high places for yourself on every plaza.

24 That thou hast also built unto thee an eminent place, and hast made thee an high place in every street.

- Ezekiel reiterates that the origin of Israel's adultery came from idolatry

— Israel's idolatry entailed the construction of shrines and high places

25 You built yourself a high place at the beginning of every street and made your beauty abominable, and **you spread your legs** to every passer-by and multiplied your obscene practice.

25 You built yourself a high place at the top of every street and made your beauty abominable, and you spread your legs to every passer-by to multiply your harlotry.

25 At every street corner you made your beauty abhorrent when you made yourself available for sex to anyone who was passing by. By doing this, you kept on committing more and more immorality.

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

- Eventually Israel's idolatry got so bad that you could find these shrines to idols on every street in Jerusalem

- "...you spread your legs" - God is now using graphic sexual imagery to describe Israel's spiritual adultery; this imagery describes Israel's self-exposure, which in turn multiplied her obscene practices

— She had perverted her beauty into an abomination, using her appearance to attract lovers (Cf. v14)

26 You also committed prostitution with the **Egyptians**, your **lustful neighbors**, and multiplied your obscene practice to provoke Me to anger.

26 You also played the harlot with the Egyptians, your lustful neighbors, and multiplied your harlotry to make Me angry.

26 Then you committed immorality with your neighbors, the Egyptians, with perverted lust, and by doing so you fornicated even more, provoking me to anger.

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

- Along with spiritual prostitution, Israel also made political and military alliances with pagan nations, whose gods Israel began to adopt (Cf. Ezek 8)

- "...Egyptians" - Israel made an alliance with Egypt, as well as other nations (Cf. Is 30:1ff; 31:1ff; 2 Kings 18:21)

- "...lustful neighbors" - *basar*, refers to male genitalia (Cf. Gen 17:11,25; Ex 28:42; Lev 15:2; Ezek 44:7). Thus, being a "lustful neighbor" conveys excessive sexual immorality.

— Instead of trusting her Husband, Israel sought help from worldly powers by forming alliances to deliberately provoke God to anger

27 So behold, I have stretched out My hand against you and cut back your rations. And I turned you over to the desire of those who hate you, the daughters of the Philistines, who

are ashamed of your outrageous conduct.

27 Behold now, I have stretched out My hand against you and diminished your rations. And I delivered you up to the desire of those who hate you, the daughters of the Philistines, who are ashamed of your lewd conduct.

27 "Therefore, look out! I've reached out to oppose you. I withdrew your rations and delivered you to those Philistine women who hate you. Even they were embarrassed at your wicked ways!

27 Behold, therefore I have stretched out my hand over thee, and have diminished thine ordinary food, and delivered thee unto the will of them that hate thee, the daughters of the Philistines, which are ashamed of thy lewd way.

- Now the consequences for Israel's waywardness...

- Because of her deliberate harlotry, God touched their food supply ("cut back your rations")

— The same point is made in Hosea 2:9. God began to reduce his wife's material possessions

— In original marriage contract between Yahweh and Israel, as outlined in the Mosaic Covenant, was a promise of abundant blessings for Israel's obedience and, conversely, a decrease in those blessings for disobedience (Cf. Ex 15:26; Lev 26; Deut 8:19-20; 27; 28:15-23; 2 Kings 24:2-3).

— When Israel committed the great spiritual adultery described since v15, God initiated the disciplinary measures prescribed in the Mosaic Law by reducing her material goods. The land began yielding less produce than before, and the empire status achieved under David and Solomon was lost.

— Additionally, the territorial holdings within the land of Israel began to dwindle as a result of pressure from surrounding countries, particularly the Arameans (Syrians) and the Philistines

— During the reign of Ahaz, the Philistines seized control of significant portions of Jewish territory and settled there. Here they are mentioned in conjunction with the Egyptians because these two nations were allies. The literal fulfillment of God's words can be seen in passages such as 2 Chr 28:18.

— Ironically, the daughters of the Philistines were ashamed of Israel's lewd way. The Philistines themselves were no strangers to extremes of idolatry, including temple prostitution. Yet, despite their own egregious practices, Jerusalem's depravity managed to shock these pagans.

28 Moreover, you committed prostitution with the Assyrians because you were not satisfied; you committed prostitution with them and still were not satisfied.

28 Moreover, you played the harlot with the Assyrians because you were not satisfied; you played the harlot with them and still were not satisfied.

28 You committed immorality with the Assyrians, because you still weren't satisfied. You committed immorality with them, but you still weren't satisfied.

28 Thou hast played the whore also with the Assyrians, because thou wast insatiable; yea, thou hast played the harlot with them, and yet couldst not be satisfied.

- In addition to the Egyptians and the Philistines, Israel also formed a political alliance with the Assyrians

— In her insatiable lust for adultery, Israel played the harlot with them as well, but in the end she was still not satisfied

29 You also multiplied your obscene practice with the land of merchants, Chaldea; yet even with this you were not satisfied."""

29 You also multiplied your harlotry with the land of merchants, Chaldea, yet even with this you were not satisfied."""

29 You committed even more immorality with that land of the merchants, the Chaldeans. But you weren't satisfied even with these!

29 Thou hast moreover multiplied thy fornication in the land of Canaan unto Chaldea; and yet thou wast not satisfied herewith.

- Israel even turned to the birthplace of idolatry: Babylon. Yet even in the place where idolatry originated, Israel was not satisfied.

30 "How feverish is your heart," declares the Lord GOD, "while you do all these things, the action of a bold prostitute!

30 "How languishing is your heart," declares the Lord GOD, "while you do all these things, the actions of a bold-faced harlot.

30 "How weak is your heart," declares the Lord GOD, "when you committed all of these deeds, the acts of an imperious whore!

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

- God characterizes Israel as a bold prostitute, whose heart was weak and who lacked devotion to her husband

Jerusalem's Idolatry

31 When you built your shrine at the beginning of every street and made your high place in every public square, in spurning a prostitute's fee, you were not like a prostitute.

31 When you built your shrine at the beginning of every street and made your high place in every square, in disdaining money, you were not like a harlot.

31 When you built your mound on every street corner and constructed your high place at every plaza, you weren't like a common prostitute, in that you've insulted the wages of a prostitute

31 In that thou buildest thine eminent place in the head of every way, and makest thine high place in every street; and hast not been as an harlot, in that thou scornest hire;
- God points out that Israel was not a typical prostitute, who was paid for her services. Israel, rather than receiving compensation, paid her lovers for their sexual favors.

32 You adulteress wife, who takes strangers instead of her husband!

32 You adulteress wife, who takes strangers instead of her husband!

32 who commits adultery, preferring a stranger over her husband!

32 But as a wife that committeth adultery, which taketh strangers instead of her husband!

- God decrees Israel as an adulterous wife! This is a profound expression of disdain and disgust.

33 Men give gifts to all prostitutes, but you give your gifts to all your lovers and lavish favors on them so that they will come to you from every direction for your obscene practices.

33 Men give gifts to all harlots, but you give your gifts to all your lovers to bribe them to come to you from every direction for your harlotries.

33 "All prostitutes receive gifts, but you give your gifts to all your lovers, then you bribe them to come to you from everywhere to get your sexual favors!

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

- God reiterated who Israel deviated from the norm by not only paying her lovers, but also bribing them to fulfill her desires

— By doing this, she disregarded any sense of shame, and gave the gifts that her husband had given her upon her lovers, the gods of the surrounding nations

34 So it is the opposite for you from those women in your obscene practices, in that you are not approached for prostitution, and in *the fact* that you pay a prostitute's fee, and no fee is paid to you; so you are the opposite."

34 Thus you are different from those women in your harlotries, in that no one plays the harlot as you do, because you give money and no money is given you; thus you are different."

34 You're different from other women when you commit immorality—no one can match you in that! After all, you pay fees, but no fee is given to you. You're certainly different!"

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

- God says Israel's stupid form of prostitution set her apart from other harlots. It was not that the other nations were innocent of adultery, but at least they didn't pay for it.

— Thus, Israel's conduct was different and even more reprehensible than that of her neighbors, pagan nations

Jeremiah was another prophet who addressed Israel's profound adultery. In 3:1-5, he asserted that Israel was not just guilty of a singular act of adultery but had also engaged in promiscuity with many lovers. This persistent infidelity led to the dissolution of the original marriage contract (31:32), rendering it null and void. Jeremiah showed that the problem was not with the Husband, for God had been faithful and kind to His wife. Rather, the problem stemmed from the wife's insistence on pursuing other gods, thus committing egregious adultery.

The prophet Hosea also referred to this adultery. In 2:2-5, he conveyed the accusation that God had against His wife: Israel was guilty of harlotry. Not only did she commit adultery (v2-3), but she also bore illegitimate children from these illicit relationships (v4). She played the part of a prostitute (v5).

(iv) God will punish his adulterous wife (16:35-43)

The stipulations of the original marriage covenant as outlined in Deuteronomy indicate that if Israel were to fall into adultery and disregard disciplinary measures, a more severe punishment would inevitably follow. Ezekiel described this more severe punishment in v35-43:

35 Therefore, you prostitute, hear the word of the LORD.

35 Therefore, O harlot, hear the word of the LORD.

35 "Therefore listen to this message from the LORD, you whore!

35 Wherefore, O harlot, hear the word of the LORD:

- After recounting the history of Israel's relationship with her Husband leading up to Ezekiel's time, "the word of the LORD" came once again, this time directly addressing the harlot (Israel), declaring what was going to happen to her...

36 This is what the Lord GOD says: "Because your lewdness was poured out and your nakedness uncovered through your obscene practices with your lovers and with all your detestable idols, and because of the blood of your sons that you gave to idols,

36 Thus says the Lord GOD, "Because your lewdness was poured out and your nakedness uncovered through your harlotries with your lovers and with all your detestable idols, and because of the blood of your sons which you gave to idols,

36 This is what the Lord GOD says: 'Because your lust has been poured out and your nakedness has been uncovered by your acts of fornication with your lovers, and because of all your detestable idols and the blood of your sons, whom you offered to them,

36 Thus saith the Lord GOD; Because thy filthiness was poured out, and thy nakedness discovered through thy whoredoms with thy lovers, and with all the idols of thy abominations, and by the blood of thy children, which thou didst give unto them;

- God announces that His punishment on Israel will directly correspond to her sin of prostitution, then four reasons for this punishment are given, each reinforcing points made previously:

1. Israel's lewdness had been "poured out"
2. Her nakedness was uncovered through her obscene practices
3. Punishment would come because of all the idols Israel had purchased with the gifts given to her by her Husband
4. The wayward wife had even offered the blood of her own children to idols

37 **therefore**, behold, I am going to gather all your lovers whom you pleased, all those whom you loved as well as all those whom you hated. So I will gather them against you from every direction and expose your nakedness to them so that they may see all your nakedness.

37 therefore, behold, I will gather all your lovers with whom you took pleasure, even all those whom you loved *and* all those whom you hated. So I will gather them against you from every direction and expose your nakedness to them that they may see all your nakedness.

37 therefore, watch out! I'm about to gather all your lovers from whom you've received your pleasure, everyone whom you've loved, and those whom you've hated. I'll gather them together to oppose you from every side, and they'll uncover your nakedness in their presence. Then they'll see you completely naked.

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

- "therefore" - because of the four sins Israel committed against God, the following punishment would be implemented...
- God would gather together the very nations that Israel had prostituted herself to through spiritual adultery—Egypt, Assyria, and Babylon—and they will become God's instruments of

judgment

- He would assemble them on every side and expose her shame before them ("reveal her nakedness")
- This punishment is also reflected in Hosea 2:10, and the failure of her allies to come to her aid during this punishment is found in Lam 1:2

38 So I will judge you as women who commit adultery or shed blood are judged; and I will bring on you the blood of wrath and jealousy.

38 Thus I will judge you like women who commit adultery or shed blood are judged; and I will bring on you the blood of wrath and jealousy.

38 I'll judge you with the same standards by which I issue verdicts against a woman who commits adultery and murder. I'll avenge the blood you've shed with impassioned wrath.

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

- Since Israel was both an adulteress and murderer, God would sentence her to the punishment befitting adulteresses and murderers

— As an adulteress, Israel engaged in idolatry with other gods; as a murderer, she offered human sacrifices to these idols

— Therefore, God pronounced on her a judgment of blood, wrath, and jealousy (Cf. Deut 6:15). If Israel betrayed her divine Husband, His jealousy would burn against her until it was spent.

39 I will also hand you over to your lovers, and they will tear down your shrines, demolish your high places, strip you of your clothing, take away your jewels, and will leave you naked and bare.

39 I will also give you into the hands of your lovers, and they will tear down your shrines, demolish your high places, strip you of your clothing, take away your jewels, and will leave you naked and bare.

39 "I'll also deliver you into their control, and they'll break down your mounds, tear down your high places, strip off your clothes, remove your fine jewels, and then they'll leave you stark naked!

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

- All of the shrines and high places would be destroyed; God would give these centers of idol worship into the hands of Israel's lovers (Egypt, Assyria, Babylon)

— Next, Israel would be stripped of her clothing and jewelry, leaving her naked and bare; essentially she would be reduced to her original state, as she was when God first found her

40 They will incite a crowd against you, and **they** will stone you and cut you to pieces with **their** swords.

40 They will incite a crowd against you and they will stone you and cut you to pieces with their swords.

40 They'll bring a mob against you to stone you to death and cut you into pieces with their swords.

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

- Under Mosaic Law, stoning was the punishment for marital infidelity (Cf. Lev 20:10; Deut 22:22-24); here, Yahweh refers to this legal provision

- "...they...their" - Israel's lovers (Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Cf. v26-29)

— They would not only use stones, they will also use swords to carry out her execution

41 And they will burn your houses with fire and execute judgments against you in the sight of many women. Then **I will put an end to your prostitution**, and you will also no longer pay your lovers.

41 They will burn your houses with fire and execute judgments on you in the sight of many women. Then I will stop you from playing the harlot, and you will also no longer pay your lovers.

41 Then they'll burn your houses and carry out my sentence against you in the sight of many women. "That's how I'll make you stop your prostitution so you won't pay any prostitute's fees anymore.

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

- Judah's destruction would be a spectacle witnessed by all of the surrounding nations ("in the sight of many women")

— The punishments described in v37-40—stripping, stoning, and burning of houses—are consistent with the commandments in the Mosaic Law regarding adultery and idolatry (Cf. Lev 20:10; 21:9)

- "...I will put an end to your prostitution" - the first outcome of God's judgment would be that He would put stop to Israel playing the harlot

— With all of her possessions stripped away, she would no longer have the means to pay her lovers; her once captivating beauty would fade

42 So I will satisfy My fury against you and My jealousy will leave you, and I will be pacified and no longer be angry.

42 So I will calm My fury against you and My jealousy will depart from you, and I will be pacified and angry no more.

42 I'll stop being angry with you, and I'll cease being jealous. I'll be calm and not be indignant anymore.

42 So will I make my fury toward thee to rest, and my jealousy shall depart from thee, and I will be quiet, and will be no more angry.

- When the judgment was over, God's wrath toward His wife would finally come to rest; His jealousy would burn itself out in the punishment, leading Him to become quiet and no longer angry

43 Since you have not remembered the days of your youth but have caused Me unrest by all these things, behold, I in turn will bring your conduct *down* on your own head," declares the Lord GOD, "so that you will not commit this outrageous sin in addition to all your *other* abominations.

43 Because you have not remembered the days of your youth but have enraged Me by all these things, behold, I in turn will bring your conduct down on your own head," declares the Lord GOD, "so that you will not commit this lewdness on top of all your *other* abominations.

43 Because you didn't remember the time when you were young, but instead you provoked me to anger because of all these things, watch out! I'm going to bring your behavior back to haunt you!" declares the Lord GOD. "Didn't you do this wicked thing, in addition to all your other detestable practices?"

43 Because thou hast not remembered the days of thy youth, but hast fretted me in all these things; behold, therefore I also will recompense thy way upon thine head, saith the Lord GOD: and thou shalt not commit this lewdness above all thine abominations.

- The summary is that God's judgment inflicted on Israel was perfectly just

— Her sin laid in her failure to remember the days of her youth...where she came from and what things were like when God found her

— Instead, she rebelled against her Husband in all these things, so Yahweh brought upon her the consequences for her actions so that she would no longer commit this lewdness with all her abominations

(v) God's adulterous wife is worse than Samaria and Sodom (16:44-52)

44 "Behold, everyone who quotes proverbs will quote *this* proverb about you, saying, 'Like mother, like daughter.'

44 "Behold, everyone who quotes proverbs will quote *this* proverb concerning you, saying, 'Like mother, like daughter.'

44 "Now, everyone who likes proverbs will quote this proverb about you, 'Like mother, like daughter.'

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

- Today we might say, "Like father, like son" but in ancient Israel, women bore the brunt of blame for many things

45 You are the daughter of your mother, who loathed her husband and children. You are also the sister of your sisters, who loathed their husbands and children. Your mother was a Hittite and your father an Amorite.

45 You are the daughter of your mother, who loathed her husband and children. You are also the sister of your sisters, who loathed their husbands and children. Your mother was a Hittite and your father an Amorite.

45 You're the daughter of your mother, who loathed her husband and children. You're the sister of your sisters, who loathed their husbands and children. "Your mother was a Hittite and your father was an Amorite.

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

- Israel reflected a hereditary trait...she was the daughter of a woman who despised her husband and her children, and she shared a bond with her sisters (v46) who also loathed their husbands and children

46 Now your **older sister** is Samaria, who lives north of you with her daughters; and your **younger sister**, who lives south of you, is Sodom with **her daughters**.

46 Now your older sister is Samaria, who lives north of you with her daughters; and your younger sister, who lives south of you, is Sodom with her daughters.

46 Your elder sister was Samaria. She and her daughters lived in the north, while your younger sister who lived in the south with her daughters was Sodom.

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

- "...older sister" - not older in age; Samaria is labeled as "older" because she grew much larger with a considerably larger population than all of Judah

- "...younger sister" - Sodom was much older than Judah/Jerusalem, but was much smaller in size

- "...her daughters" - Sodom's daughters would have been Gomorrah, Admah, and Zeboiim (Cf. Gen 14:2). Sodom was the key city of the four.

47 Yet you have not *merely* walked in their ways and committed their abominations; *but*, as if that were too little, you also acted more corruptly in all your conduct than they.

47 Yet you have not merely walked in their ways or done according to their abominations; but, as if that were too little, you acted more corruptly in all your conduct than they.

47 It wasn't just that you lived like they did and committed their detestable practices, but in just a little while your behavior led you to become more corrupt than they were!"

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

- Jerusalem not only adopted the practices of Samaria and Sodom, she soon surpassed them in their corruption, even more morally depraved in everything she did

Sins of Sodom

48 **As I live," declares the Lord GOD**, "Sodom, your sister and her daughters have not done as you and your daughters have done!

48 As I live," declares the Lord GOD, "Sodom, your sister and her daughters have not done as you and your daughters have done.

48 "As I live," declares the Lord GOD, "your sister Sodom and her daughters didn't do what you and your daughters have done.

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

- "...As I live," declares the Lord GOD" - through this oath, even through Sodom was famous as the epitome of depravity in the history of the Jewish people, they were surpassed by the wickedness found in Jerusalem

49 Behold, this was the guilt of your sister Sodom: she and her daughters had arrogance, plenty of food, and carefree ease, but she did not help the poor and needy.

49 Behold, this was the guilt of your sister Sodom: she and her daughters had arrogance, abundant food and careless ease, but she did not help the poor and needy.

49 Look! This was the sin of your sister Sodom and her daughters: Pride, too much food, undisturbed peace, and failure to help the poor and needy.

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

50 So they were haughty and committed abominations before Me. **Therefore I removed them when I saw it.**

50 Thus they were haughty and committed abominations before Me. Therefore I removed them when I saw it.

50 In their arrogance, they committed detestable practices in my presence, so when I saw it, I removed them.

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

- "...Therefore I removed them when I saw *it*" - all of these sins (below) were the reason that God took Sodom and the sister cities away. They were destroyed by fire and brimstone, as He saw fit.

Six Aspects of Sodom's Iniquity

1. There was pride toward God (49a).
2. There was fulness of bread, referring to trust in material prosperity in contrast to trust in God (v49b).
3. There was prosperous ease in Sodom and her daughters, showing that these cities were relying on false security (v49c).
4. Sodom neglected to strengthen the hand of the poor and needy (v49d).
5. She and her sisters were haughty toward other cities (v50a).
6. They committed abomination before God, which, as is known from Gen 13:13; 19:1-11, included the two key sins of idolatry and homosexuality (v50b).

God sent Isaiah, Jeremiah, Daniel, and Ezekiel to Jerusalem to urge repentance, but Jerusalem did not return to her first love. In the end, she bore far greater guilt than Sodom because she had received more revelation. Therefore, Jesus could say in Matt 11:23-24:

23 *And you, Capernaum, will not be exalted to heaven, will you? You will be brought down to Hades! For if the miracles that occurred in you had occurred in Sodom, it would have remained to this day.*

24 *Nevertheless I say to you that it will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom on the day of judgment, than for you."*

While this passage contains a curse against first-century Capernaum, where Yeshua established the headquarters of His ministry, the same truth applies to Jerusalem in Ezekiel's time. On the day of judgment, it will be more tolerable for the people of Sodom than for the Jewish people who committed the great adultery.

51 Furthermore, Samaria did not commit half of your sins, for you have multiplied your abominations more than they. So you have made your sisters appear innocent by all your abominations which you have committed.

51 Furthermore, Samaria did not commit half of your sins, for you have multiplied your abominations more than they. Thus you have made your sisters appear righteous by all your abominations which you have committed.

51 Samaria didn't commit half of your sins—you practiced more detestable deeds than they did! You've caused your sister to be more righteous than you, because of the

detestable practices that you've committed.

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

- The comparison now moves to Samaria vs Jerusalem...
- When comparing the two cities, Samaria committed half of Jerusalem's sins, yet they still faced punishment from God. Don't forget that Jerusalem bore a greater guilt because she had received greater revelation than Samaria.
- When comparing Samaria to Jerusalem, it's almost as if Samaria was righteous when you consider all of Jerusalem's abominations

52 Also, bear your disgrace in that you have made judgment favorable for your sisters. Because of your sins in which you acted more abominably than they, they are more in the right than you. Yes, be also ashamed and bear your disgrace, in that you made your sisters appear innocent.

52 Also bear your disgrace in that you have made judgment favorable for your sisters. Because of your sins in which you acted more abominably than they, they are more in the right than you. Yes, be also ashamed and bear your disgrace, in that you made your sisters appear righteous.

52 So now, bear your own shame as you mediate for your sisters. The sins that you've committed are more detestable than theirs. That makes them more righteous than you. Indeed, be ashamed and bear your reproach, because you've made your sisters to be more righteous than you."

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

- God declared that Jerusalem would bear her own shame because she had passed judgment on her sisters (Samaria, Sodom)

- When Jerusalem witnessed the destruction of Sodom in the days of Abraham and the downfall of Samaria over a century before Ezekiel's time, she consoled herself by saying, "They were wiped out because they were bad."

- In this way, Jerusalem condemned the sins of Sodom and Samaria. However, over time, the city surpassed Sodom and Samaria in her own sins. By virtue of Jerusalem's more abominable sins, Sodom and Samaria became relatively more righteous than she.

The comparisons drawn between Jerusalem and her sister cities in the previous section give rise to the following thought: God has repeatedly promised in the OT to bring about the restoration of Jerusalem. Given the city's sinfulness, could He do any less for Sodom

and Samaria, who were comparatively less guilty? The principle drawn from v51b-52 seems clear: If He restores Jerusalem, He must also restore these two cities. Verses 53-59 deal with this restoration of Sodom and Samaria and also mention Jerusalem's future. As will be seen, the passage primarily consists of far-distant prophecies pertaining to events that will come to fruition in the Messianic Kingdom.

(vi) God will restore his adulterous wife (16:53-63)

53 "Nevertheless, I will restore their fortunes, the fortunes of Sodom and her daughters, the fortunes of Samaria and her daughters, and along with them your own fortunes,

53 "Nevertheless, I will restore their captivity, the captivity of Sodom and her daughters, the captivity of Samaria and her daughters, and along with them your own captivity,

53 "I'll bring them back from their captivity—that is, from the captivity of Sodom and her daughters, along with the captivity of Samaria and her daughters and the captivity of your captives among them.

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

- A day is coming when all three cities—Sodom, Samaria, and Jerusalem—will be restored

54 so that **you will bear your disgrace and feel ashamed** for all that you have done when you become a consolation to them.

54 in order that you may bear your humiliation and feel ashamed for all that you have done when you become a consolation to them.

54 But you'll continue to bear your own reproach and be humiliated for everything that you've done. You'll be a comfort to them.

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

- "...you will bear your disgrace and feel ashamed" - the purpose for the restoration—so that Israel will bear their own shame for all that she has done

— In that sense, Jerusalem is a source of comfort for Samaria and Sodom, because her extreme abominations paved the way for their restoration. If Jerusalem had not surpassed them in wickedness, there might not have been a prospect of restoration for Samaria and Sodom.

— However, since Jerusalem's transgressions exceeded theirs and because God promised to restore Jerusalem, it follows that He would also restore those other two cities—indeed, a comforting thought.

55 Your sisters, Sodom with her daughters and Samaria with her daughters, will return to their former state, and you with your daughters will *also* return to your former state.

55 Your sisters, Sodom with her daughters and Samaria with her daughters, will return to their former state, and you with your daughters will *also* return to your former state.

55 Your sister Sodom and her daughters will be restored to their former status. Samaria and her daughters will be restored to their former status. Then you and your daughters will be restored to your former status.

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

- All three cities will return to their former possessions. This implies that in the messianic kingdom, Sodom will be a city again.

56 As *the name of* your sister Sodom was not heard from your lips in your day of pride,

56 As *the name of* your sister Sodom was not heard from your lips in your day of pride,

56 "When you were being so arrogant, you never once mentioned your sister Sodom

56 For thy sister Sodom was not mentioned by thy mouth in the day of thy pride,

- In God's eyes, Sodom was innocent when compared to Jerusalem, yet the people of Jerusalem refused to even mention Sodom by mouth because it was known as the epitome of wickedness, the embodiment of evil. They held Sodom in utter contempt.

57 before your wickedness was uncovered, so now you *have become* the disgrace of the daughters of Edom and of all who are around her, of the daughters of the Philistines—those surrounding you who despise you.

57 before your wickedness was uncovered, so now you have become the reproach of the daughters of Edom and of all who are around her, of the daughters of the Philistines—those surrounding you who despise you.

57 before your wickedness was revealed. Now you've become an object of derision to the inhabitants of Aram and its neighbors, including the Philistines—all those around you who despise you.

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

- Before Jerusalem's wickedness was uncovered, she could crow over Sodom's sin. However, once her own sins were brought to light, she had no grounds for claiming superiority over Sodom.

— At the time of the reproach of the daughters of Syria, when the Arameans (Syrians) and the Philistines began to seize Jewish territory, the wickedness and evils of Jerusalem

became clearly evident

— Subsequently, when the Assyrians destroyed both Aram (Syria) and Philistia, sparing Jerusalem, the Israelites mistakenly interpreted this as a sign of Jerusalem's superior righteousness. As time passed, it became clear that this interpretation was incorrect.

58 You have suffered *the penalty of your outrageous sin and abominations*," the LORD declares.

58 You have borne *the penalty of your lewdness and abominations*," the LORD declares.
58 You are to bear the punishment of your wickedness and detestable practices," declares the LORD,

58 Thou hast borne thy lewdness and thine abominations, saith the LORD.

- God reiterates that Jerusalem was guilty for the sin of adultery through idolatry, and Yahweh proclaimed that she would have to suffer the consequences of her outrageous sin and abominations

59 For this is what the Lord GOD says: "I will also do with you as you have done, you who have despised the oath by breaking the covenant.

59 For thus says the Lord GOD, "I will also do with you as you have done, you who have despised the oath by breaking the covenant.

59 "since the Lord GOD says, 'I'll deal with you according to what you've done, when you despised your oath by breaking the covenant.

59 For thus saith the Lord GOD; I will even deal with thee as thou hast done, which hast despised the oath in breaking the covenant.

- God would judge Israel based on the condemnation clauses of the Mosaic Covenant
— By breaking the Mosaic Covenant, Israel violated her marriage vows, so her punishment would be more severe because she was Yahweh's wife
— While adultery itself is sinful, the other nations were not punished for committing spiritual adultery to the same extent because they were not in a covenantal relationship, or marriage, with Yahweh as Israel was.

Before v60-63, it is helpful to review the progression of Israel's marital relationship with God up to this point. Due to Israel's great adultery, a rift opened up between God and His people. Is 50:1 says,

1 This is what the LORD says: "Where is the certificate of divorce By which I have sent your mother away? Or to whom of My creditors did I sell you? Behold, you were sold for your wrongdoings, And for your wrongful acts your mother was sent away.

According to Deut 24:1, if a husband wanted to divorce his wife, he was required to draft a certificate of divorce. After writing it out, he would present it to his wife, then the divorce

was final.

By Isaiah's time, Israel's adultery had reached such staggering proportions that God withheld His many blessings from her—the blessings outlined in Deuteronomy that were promised if Israel remained faithful. This withdrawal of blessings led many in Israel to speculate that God had divorced His wife. But God told Isaiah that He had not yet divorced His wife. If He did, He would have given Israel a bill of divorcement, but since no such document was in hand, there was no divorce. Instead of a divorce, a separation had taken place, caused by Israel's unfaithfulness. So in the days of Isaiah, God and Israel were separated, not divorced. This separation lasted approximately one hundred years.

During this approximate 100 year period, the blessings outlined in Deuteronomy continued to be withheld. Yet, even after 100 years of separation, Israel failed to return to Yahweh, her Husband. Thus, God was compelled to finally issue the bill of divorcement (Jer 3:6-10). After once again declaring Israel guilty of adultery (Jer 3:6-8), God formally issued the certificate of divorce. This step became necessary because of the adulterous pollution of the land that God had given to Israel (Jer 3:9-10).

The original marriage contract between Israel and God—the book of Deuteronomy—explicitly stated that if Israel proved unfaithful, it would become necessary for God to punish His wife. Therefore, once the bill of divorcement was issued, there ensued a prolonged period of punishment for Israel's sins. Numerous prophets in the OT attest to this punishment, including the passage previously referred to (Ezek 16:35-43). The purpose of this punishment was not for God to exact revenge upon His wife but rather to compel her to cease her adulterous behavior (v43). Verses 58-59 indicate that this punishment was warranted because Israel had violated the terms of the marriage contract (Cf. Hosea 2:18).

To this day, Israel is still in this period of punishment. The persecutions of Jews around the world and the present worldwide dispersion prove this point. However, the Jewish prophets did not leave things without hope. They foresaw a future when God would restore Israel as His wife. This restoration will necessitate a new marriage contract, which is detailed in Jer 31:31-34. What is often called "the New Covenant" is, in many respects, a new marriage contract that God will make with the houses of Israel and Judah (v31). The need for this new marriage contract arises because the old contract was broken (v32). Although God was a good husband, Israel strayed and, through adultery, caused the original marriage contract to be nullified. With the new marriage covenant, Israel will be restored to the place of blessing (v33-34). This concept of remarriage on the basis of a new contract is also depicted in v60-63.

Everlasting Covenant

60 "Nevertheless, I will remember My covenant with you in the days of your youth, and I will establish **aneverlasting covenant** with you.

60 "Nevertheless, I will remember My covenant with you in the days of your youth, and I will establish an everlasting covenant with you.

60 "Meanwhile, as for me, I'll remember my covenant with you from when you were young, because I'll establish an eternal covenant with you.

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

- "Nevertheless, I will remember" - a promise that God will remember the covenant He made with Israel in her infancy; the reference here is to the Land Covenant that God made with them while Israel was wandering in the wilderness (Cf. Deut 29-30)

- "...an everlasting covenant" - referring to the Land Covenant. Deut 30:1-10 provides eight key provisions of the Land Covenant:

1. Moses spoke prophetically of Israel's coming disobedience to the Mosaic Law and subsequent scattering over all the world (Deut. 29:22–30:5). All remaining provisions speak of various facets of Israel's final restoration.
2. Israel will repent (Deut 30:2)
3. Messiah will return (Deut 30:3)
4. Israel will be regathered (Deut 30:3-4)
5. Israel will possess the Promised Land (Deut 30:5)
6. Israel will be regenerated (Deut 30:6)
7. The enemies of Israel will be judged (Deut 30:7)
8. Israel will receive full blessing, specifically, the blessings of the Messianic Kingdom (Deut 30:8-10)

— The Land Covenant is Israel's "title deed" to the land. Despite her unfaithfulness and disobedience, Israel never lost her right to the land. Her enjoyment of the land is contingent upon her obedience, but her ownership of it is unconditional.

— The Land Covenant is confirmed, centuries later, by this passage (16:60-63). God unequivocally declared that he would remember this covenant, which was made centuries earlier while Israel was wandering in the wilderness. A similar confirmation is found in Jer 32:36-44.

— This statement is emphatic, leaving no room for doubt about its fulfillment

How do the Land Covenant, the New Covenant, and the Mosaic Covenant differ in this promise made in v60? The Mosaic Covenant also promised a future restoration of Israel (Lev 26:40-45). However, while God will remember this aspect of the Mosaic Covenant, He will not re-establish that covenant. With the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus, this covenant became obsolete. It is gone forever. What He promised to establish in v60 is an

everlasting covenant, which is the same as the New Covenant of Jer 31:31-34. This New Covenant will serve as the basis of the remarriage, just as the temporary Mosaic Covenant was the basis of the first marriage.

61 Then you will remember your ways and be ashamed when you receive your sisters, *both* your older and your younger; and I will give them to you as daughters, but not because of your covenant.

61 Then you will remember your ways and be ashamed when you receive your sisters, *both* your older and your younger; and I will give them to you as daughters, but not because of your covenant.

61 Then you'll remember your behavior and be ashamed when you greet your sisters—your elder sister and your younger sister. I'll give them to you as daughters, but not on account of my covenant with you.

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

- At long last, one day, Israel will repent of her great adultery. Upon that repentance, Israel will "receive your sisters" (Samaria and Sodom). As they are restored, Jerusalem will also experience restoration.

— God "will give them to you as daughters" implying that Samaria and Sodom will be subservient to Jerusalem, meaning they will become part of Jerusalem's possessions, "but not because of your covenant" (referring to the New Covenant)

62 So I will establish My covenant with you, and you shall know that I am the LORD,

62 Thus I will establish My covenant with you, and you shall know that I am the LORD,

62 I'll establish my covenant with you, and then you'll know that I am the LORD.

62 And I will establish my covenant with thee; and thou shalt know that I am the LORD:

- The LORD reiterates His commitment to establishing the New Covenant

- "...I" - in the emphatic position, meaning God alone has the authority and power to establish the New Covenant

63 so that you may remember and be ashamed, and not open your mouth again because of your disgrace, **when I have forgiven you for all that you have done**," the Lord GOD declares.

63 so that you may remember and be ashamed and never open your mouth anymore because of your humiliation, when I have forgiven you for all that you have done," the Lord GOD declares.

63 Then you will remember, be ashamed, and you won't open your mouth anymore due to humiliation when I will have made atonement for you for everything that you've done,' declares the Lord GOD."

63 That thou mayest remember, and be confounded, and never open thy mouth any more because of thy shame, when I am pacified toward thee for all that thou hast done, saith the Lord GOD.

- There will be four results of the New Covenant and God's remarriage to Israel:

1. Israel will intimately know YHWH, recognizing Him as her true and faithful Husband (v62b)
2. She will remember all past acts of unfaithfulness (v63a)
3. She will be confounded by this memory (v63b)
4. She will never open her mouth anymore (v63c). This statement does not imply that women will be silenced in the Messianic Kingdom; rather, it signifies that Israel will no longer boast due to her profound shame.

- "...when I have forgiven you for all that you have done" - this sordid chapter concludes when God said that He will have forgiven His wife for all that she had done

— At the time of Israel's national regeneration, God will extend forgiveness to Israel and reconcile with her as His beloved and cherished wife (Cf. Is 54:1-8; 62:4-5; Hosea 2:14-23).

As early as Gen 12:3, God promised that the Gentiles would partake in the spiritual aspects of the Jewish covenants. One fulfillment of this promise is seen in the formation of the church. The church was established in Acts 2 when the Holy Spirit initiated the work of Spirit baptism. Comprising all believers—both Jews and Gentiles—from Acts 2 until the rapture of the church, the church is not to be equated with the new Israel or the spiritual Israel. Rather, it is described as the one new man in Eph 2:15. The church has not replaced Israel or inherited Israel's covenants, blessings, or promises, nor are God's promises to Israel being fulfilled through the church. However, the church does partake in Jewish spiritual blessings. The Jewish covenants include both physical and spiritual promises. The physical promises are limited to the Jewish people, but the spiritual promises extend to the Gentiles. Therefore, the spiritual aspects of the New Covenant are available to all who believe in Jesus Christ. The covenant's physical provisions, however, belong only to the house of Israel and the house of Judah (Jer 31:31).

In summary, the allegory in Ezek 16 addresses Israel's past, present, and future. Due to her unfaithfulness, God first separated from His wife, then divorced her. Israel entered a long period of punishment, beginning with the Babylonian Captivity and continuing through what is known as "the times of the Gentiles" (Luke 21:24) until the nation of Israel is saved.

This period includes the destruction of the Second Temple in 70 AD and everything that has happened to the Jewish people since.

The Relationship Stages Between God and Israel

1. The marriage (Deut 5:1-3; Ezek 16:6-14): the covenant relationship is the marriage contract of Deuteronomy.
2. The great adultery (Jer 3:1-5; Ezek 16:15-34): despite God's many blessings, Israel turned away to idolatry and therefore was guilty of spiritual adultery.
3. The separation (Is 50:1): Israel's sin created a need for separation that effectively put Israel on notice of impending divorce. This separation lasted about 100 years.
4. The divorce (Jer 3:6-10; Hosea 1-14): after about 100 years of failing to repent, God finally issued the certificate of divorce on the grounds of adultery.
5. The punishment (Ezek 16:35-43): the original marriage contract stipulated that unfaithfulness would be punished. Israel is still in this state of punishment for her sins, as can be seen by the *Diaspora* and the continued persecution of the Jewish people.
6. The remarriage and restoration of blessings (Jer 31:31-34; Ezek 16:60-63)--a future event: the new marital union is based on an eternal covenant between God and the house of both Israel and Judah, known as the New Covenant. Therefore, the marriage itself becomes an everlasting covenant. Israel will remain faithful to God and enter into a state of perpetual security and blessing.