

LONG OUTLINE ON EZEKIEL CHAPTER 17

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REVIEW

- A. Previously we saw Ezekiel perform “street theatre”:
 - a. Siege of Jerusalem: 4.1 – 8
 - b. Cooking over animal excrement: 4.9 – 17
 - c. Use of hair and beard: 5.1 – 4
 - d. Baggage thru the wall: 12.1 – 7
- B. But now he uses metaphor, riddle, allegory, and fable to make his points.
 - a. Chap. 15: The uselessness of the wood of a grapevine it is not producing fruit
 - b. Chap. 16: The unfaithful daughter/queen
 - c. Chap. 17: The eagle, the cedar, and the vine
 - d. (Chap. 18: Interlude on inherited guilt/innocence)
 - e. Chap. 19: The lioness and her cubs

CHAPTER 17: INTRODUCTION

- A. Flow of the chapter:
 - a. Riddle/parable/fable (vss. 1 – 10) ==>
 - b. Historical (vss. 11 – 18) ==>
 - c. Theological (vss. 19 – 21) ==>
 - d. Eschatological (vss. 22 – 24)
- B. The terms “riddle” [Heb. *ḥîdâ*] and “proverb” [Heb. *māšāl*]
 - a. See Elaine’s explanation from last time for details
 - b. For a summary, cf. Duguid, NIVAC, *Ezekiel*, p. 222: “A riddle (Heb. *ḥîdâ*) is a statement that hides the truth it imparts, while a parable (*māšāl*) elucidates the truth that underlies it by putting it in a fresh light.”
 - i. Example: Samson’s riddle [*ḥîdâ*] in Jdg 14
 - ii. Ezek 12.22 – 23: *māšāl* as a common saying (shibboleth): “The days are long and every vision fails.”
 - iii. Ezek 14.8: When a false prophet is “cut off” from the nation, he will become a *māšāl* = proverb, byword, example, taunt
 - c. In Ezekiel, the terms appear together in this chapter (vs. 1) ==> the known and the unknown are together as a story.
 - d. These two words also used in Hab 2.6 translated as “taunt” and “derision”
 - e. I.e., from vs. 1 we have a premonition that something bad is coming...
- C. Historical context: We will see this after the “riddle/proverb”

PARALLELS BETWEEN EZEKIEL CHAPTER 17 AND CHAPTER 12

(Block, I, 523)

	CHAPTER 12 (vss.)	CHAPTER 17 (vss.)
Preamble	1 – 2	1 – 2
Figurative presentation	3 – 7	3 – 10
Question concerning its meaning	8 – 9	11 – 12a
Divinely authorized interpretation	10 – 15	12b – 21
Ray of hope	16a	22 – 23
Recognition formula	16b	24

CHAPTER 17: DETAILS

VERSES 1 & 2: SETTING THE STAGE

1. Usual beginning for an oracle: “The word of the Lord came to me saying...”
2. The words “riddle” and “proverb”
 - a. See intro above for details on the meaning of these words
 - b. Literally, if “riddle” and “proverb” could be used as verbs, this passage would say, “Son of man, *riddle* a riddle and *proverb* a proverb to the house of Israel.”
 - c. The Greeks had a word for it (LXX):
 - i. riddle [*hîdâ*] is διήγημα that can mean “tale,” “story,” “narrative”
 - 1) Translated as πρόβλημα (problem) in Jdg 14 (Samson)
 - 2) and as αἰνίγματα (enigmas) in Prov 1.6.
 - ii. proverb [*māšāl*] is παραβολή, which is our word “parable,” and what is used in the NT for Jesus’s parables.

VERSES 3 – 10: THE RIDDLE/PROVERB PRESENTED

3. The eagle, Lebanon, and the cedar
 - a. Eagle
 - i. The word for eagle [Heb: *nešer*] can also mean vulture (specifically the griffon vulture)
 - 1) But IMHO, w/ the varicolored plumage, *eagle* is preferred
 - 2) We will see later that the *nešer* is a king, and kings describe themselves and are described as eagles (Cf.: Hos 8.1; Hab 1.8; Isa 46.11; Jer 48.40; 49.22)

- 3) Example: Esarhaddon, king of Assyria and son of Sennacherib, boasts, “Like a furious eagle I spread my pinions to destroy my enemies.” (Quoted by Block, fn 96, l, 540.)
 - 4) But here the eagle is benevolent.
 - ii. Described w/ the definite article “the”: *the* great eagle; *the* great wings; *the* long pinions; *the* varicolored plumage.
 - iii. The use of the definite article differentiates this eagle from the one in vs. 7 (more later)
 - iv. The word for “varicolored” is the same as the colorful, embroidered garment provided to the daughter/queen in 16.10.
 - b. Lebanon: north of Israel known for its cedars
 - c. Cedars
 - i. Majestic trees that can reach 130 ft. high and be 8 ft. in diameter
 - ii. Used for building
 - iii. Can be used as a metaphor for a nation (Ezek 31)
 - iv. The eagle plucks off the *top* [Heb: *šammeret*]
 - 1) Used five time in the OT only in Ezek
 - 2) *May* be related to a term for “wool”
 - 3) *May* refer to the tops of the trees that are so high they are in the clouds
- 4. The eagle’s action
 - a. Plucks the top (different word) twigs from the cedar
 - b. Brings them to a
 - i. “city of merchants” [Heb: *kěna’an* = *merchants* or *Canaan* (LXX)]
 - ii. “city of traders” [Lit: “those that go about”]
- 5. “Took from the seed of the land”
 - a. Probably better translated as “seedling” since we are talking about trees and vines
 - b. Planted the seedling in fertile soil [Lit. “ground for seed(s)"]
 - c. Placed it near abundant waters as one would a willow tree
 - d. **NOTE HOW WELL THE EAGLE IS TREATING THE SEEDLING!**
- 6. The seedling sprouts into a vine
 - a. Low [Lit. “low of stature”] and spread out
 - b. Keeps its roots well planted in the fertile, well-watered soil
 - c. Turns its branches towards the eagle; i.e., the vine seems happy w/ the arrangement
- 7. The second eagle and the vine
 - a. This second eagle described more demurely: than the first eagle:
 - i. “great eagle,” but not “the great eagle”;
 - ii. “great wings” but not “the great wings”;
 - iii. “great plumage” but not varicolored;
 - iv. No pinions
 - v. This eagle is “laid back” compared to the first one that is very active
 - b. The vine

- i. Bends its roots towards the second eagle
 - ii. Sends branches towards the second eagle
 - iii. Hopes the second eagle will “water” the vine
 - iv. *NOTE THAT THE VINE TAKES THE INITIATIVE, NOT THE SECOND EAGLE!*
8. The first eagle planted the seedling/vine in fertile, well-watered soil so it would:
- a. Yield branches
 - b. Bear fruit
 - c. Become a splendid vine
 - d. *BUT the vine “disses” the first eagle and pursues the second one that did nothing for the vine. (Shades of chapter 16.)*

VERSES 9, 10: THE LORD’S QUESTIONS

9. The Lord’s first set of questions and a comment:
- a. Will the vine thrive?
 - b. Will not the first eagle pull up the vine from the roots?
 - c. Will he not *cut off* [only place this word is used] the fruit so it withers?
 - d. Comment: No power will raise it again.
 - i. I.e., it will not arise again, for its roots are destroyed, and no one can reestablish the vine.
 - ii. But this can also be translated as “No great arm or mighty army will be needed to uproot it” [Block, I, 529 – 30]. I.e., its destruction will be easy. (But see vs. 17.)

10. The Lord’s second set of questions:

- a. Though planted, will it thrive?
- b. Will not the east wind make it wither?
 - i. East wind: *khamzin* or *sharav*
 - ii. Used as an image of destruction (Cf. Jer 4.11; 18.17):

4.11: At that time it will be said to this people and to Jerusalem, “A scorching wind from the bare heights in the wilderness, in the direction of the daughter of my people—not to winnow and not to cleanse ...

18.17: Like an east wind I will scatter them before the enemy; I will show them my back and not my face In the day of their disaster.”

VERSES 11 – 21: EXPLANATION

11. The word of the Lord comes to Ezekiel for the explanation [*Parallels vs. 1*]

HISTORICAL EXCURSUS 1

THE LATTER KINGS	CHRONOLOGY (<u>±</u> 1 yr.)
<p>1. <u>Josiah King of Judah</u> (1 Kings 22, 23; 2 Chronicles 34 – 36)</p> <p>1.1. Eight years old when he began to reign after the murder of his father (a very bad king!).</p> <p>1.2. At age 12 he begins a wide-ranging religious reform</p> <p>1.3. In his eighteenth year (now 26 yrs. old) he repairs the temple where the “Book of the Law” is found</p> <p>1.4. Josiah Renews the Covenant</p> <p>1.5. Josiah Renews the Covenant</p> <p>1.6. Josiah Celebrates the Passover</p> <p>1.7. The Death of Josiah (39 yrs. old)</p>	<p>b. 648 – d. 609</p> <p>r. 640 – 609</p> <p>(627: The word of the Lord comes to Jeremiah)</p>
<p>2. <u>Jehoahaz King of Judah</u> (2 Kings 23:31-35 & 2 Chronicles 36:2-4)</p> <p>2.1. Twenty-three yrs. old and reigned three (3) months</p> <p>2.2. Pharaoh Neco II takes him to Egypt in chains where he dies (Jer 20.10 – 12)</p>	<p>r. 609 – reigned 3 months</p>
<p>3. <u>Jehoiakim King of Judah</u> (2 Kings 23:36-24:7 & 2 Chronicles 36:5-8 [cf. Jeremiah 35-36])</p> <p>3.1. Son of Josiah (Jehoahaz’s brother)</p> <p>3.2. Installed by Pharaoh Necho, but becomes servant of Nebuchadnezzar after eight (8) years.</p> <p>3.3. After three years he rebelled against Nebuchadnezzar and dies, but no details appear how he died</p>	<p>609 – begins reign; d. 598</p> <p>605 – switches allegiance to Nebuchadnezzar after the latter defeats the Egyptians at Carchemish (Cf Jer.46.2).</p> <p>Daniel taken to Babylon</p> <p>Nebuchadnezzar’s father dies, so he Goes back to Babylon to become king. Two tough years for Babylon, and Egypt makes incursion into the Levant, so Jehoiakim switches allegiance back to Egypt (2 I 24.1; Jer 34.15 – 17).</p>
<p>4. <u>Jehoiachin King of Judah</u> (2 Kings 24:8-17 & 2 Chronicles 36:9-10)</p> <p>4.1. Eighteen years old when he begins and reigns three (3) months</p> <p>4.2. Gives up to the king of Babylon and is taken there along w/ the royal family</p> <p>4.3. (He is released after 37 years of captivity [2 Kings 25:27-30 & Jeremiah 52:31-34])</p>	<p>598 – begins reign</p> <p>597 – Nebuchadnezzar returns w/ a vengeance to bring Judah back into the Babylonian fold. Jehoiachin and family go into exile.</p> <p>Ezekiel amongst the exiles</p> <p>Ezekiel prophesized from 593 – 571</p> <p><i>(NB: The years of the exile are pinned to the year Jehoiachin went into exile.)</i></p>

<p>5. <i>Zedekiah King of Judah</i> (2 Kings 24:18-20, 2 Chronicles 36:11-14 & Jeremiah 52:1-3 (also Jeremiah 32- 34, 37-38))</p> <p>5.1. Installed by Nebuchadnezzar</p> <p>5.2. Son of Josiah, which makes him uncle of Jehoiachin</p> <p>5.3. Twenty-one years old and reigns eleven years</p> <p>5.4. Rebels against Nebuchadnezzar in his ninth year (588)</p> <p>5.5. Jerusalem falls and Zedekiah is captured fleeing Jerusalem (We discussed this in chapter 12.)</p> <p>5.6. Dies in Babylon sightless and alone</p>	<p>r. 597 – 586</p> <p>588 – Nebuchadnezzar begins siege of Jerusalem 586 – Jerusalem destroyed!</p>
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12. “Do you not know what these things mean?” **[Parallels vs. 2, 3, and 4]**
- a. Israel called a “rebellious house” (Cf. 1 2:5, 6, 8; 3:9, 26-27; 12:2-3, 9, 25; 17:12; 24:3)
 - b. “The king of Babylon came to Jerusalem, took its king and princes and brought them to him in Babylon.” Nebuchadnezzar took Jehoiachin and his family captive in 597. Ezekiel is amongst them.
13. “He took one of the royal family and made a covenant with him, putting him under oath. He also took away the mighty of the land...” **[Parallels vs. 5]**
- a. Nebuchadnezzar put Zedekiah in as king as a vassal w/ an oath (597).
 - b. 2 Kgs 24.11-15. “Put under oath”; Lit. “caused him to enter an oath.”
14. “That the kingdom might be in subjection, not exalting itself, but keeping his covenant that it might continue.” **[Parallels vs. 6, 7a]**
- a. Judah to be a vassal=not exalt itself but see its subjugation, represented as a low vine.
 - b. Keep the covenant w/ Nebuchadnezzar or Judah will not continue
15. “But he rebelled against him by sending his envoys to Egypt that they might give him horses and many troops.” **[Parallels vs. 7b, 8, 9]**
- a. Zedekiah sends for help to Egypt, breaks his treaty (covenant, oath) w/ Nebuchadnezzar, but he will not succeed (588).
 - i. Before this it appears that Zedekiah took part in a rebellion against Nebuchadnezzar in his fourth year (594) when he got together w/ Edom, Ammon, and Tyre to rebel against Nebuchadnezzar (Cf. Jer 27.1 – 28.1).
 - ii. Nebuchadnezzar defeats the coalition.
 - iii. From Jer 51.59, it appears Zedekiah visited Babylon, perhaps to explain himself to Nebuchadnezzar.
 - iv. Nebuchadnezzar continues w/ Zedekiah as his vassal until Zedekiah rebels for good later. (The reason is unknown except that Zedekiah was evil in the sight of the Lord (2 Kgs 24.19))
 - v. In short, it appears Zedekiah was given a “second chance” and blew it.

- b. More questions:
- i. Will he succeed?
 - ii. Can he break the covenant and escape?
16. Zedekiah will die in the country whose covenant he broke; i.e., Babylon.
17. Pharaoh (the second eagle) will not help him [*Parallels vs. 7*]
18. Zedekiah despised the oath he took w/ Nebuchadnezzar
19. Zedekiah despised the oath he took in the name of the Lord (2 Chr 36.13).
- a. This is the more serious offence.
 - b. Note the story of the Gibeonites (Josh 9, 10; 2 Sam 21)
 - i. The Gibeonites fool Joshua that they are from afar and not under the curse for destruction that the Lord demanded of the Israelites when they came into the land (Josh 9.3 – 13)
 - ii. Joshua and the leaders examine the provisions of the Gibeonites, and they're convinced they are from afar, but did not check w/ the Lord (vs. 14).
 - iii. The leaders make a covenant w/ the Gibeonites (vss. 15, 16) and take an oath (vs. 15) not to destroy them (vs. 15)
 - iv. After three days the Israelites learn of the ruse—

But the sons of Israel did not attack them because the leaders of the congregation *had sworn to them by the Lord*, the God of Israel. And the whole congregation grumbled against the leaders (vs. 18).

And all the leaders said to the whole congregation, “We have *sworn to them by the Lord, the God of Israel*, and now we cannot touch them” (vs. 19).
 - c. Later Saul tried to wipe out the Gibeonites, which resulted in the execution of some of the sons of Saul as atonement (2 Sam 21)
20. The Lord himself will “spread the net” over Zedekiah and bring him to Babylon (Cf. 12.13)
21. Zedekiah’s army scattered
- a. All the “choice men.”
 - i. Some manuscripts and versions read “choice men,” while most manuscripts read “fugitives”;
 - ii. The difference arises from the reversal, or metathesis, of two letters, מְבַרְחִי (miv**r**akhayv) for מְבַרְחִי (miv**k**harayv).
 - b. Troops will fall by the sword (Cf. 12.14)
 - c. Survivors scattered (Cf. 12.14)

HISTORICAL EXCURSUS 2
(Modified from the chart for chapter 12)

Ezekiel 12.12 – 14	2 Kings 25.1 – 7	Ezekiel 17.20, 21
The prince will go out in the dark;	“All the men of war fled by night.”	

They will dig a hole thru the wall to bring out their baggage;	The fled "by way of the gate between the two walls"	
Caught in the Lord's snare;	"They [the king and his men] went by way of the Arabah. But the army of the Chaldeans pursued the king and overtook him in the plains of Jericho." "Then they captured the king and brought him up to the king of Babylon at Riblah."	"I will spread My net over him, and he will be caught in My snare."
The prince will be brought into the land of the Chaldeans (Babylon) and will die there;	They "bound him with bronze shackles, and brought him to Babylon."	"Then I will bring him to Babylon..."
The prince will not see the land w/ his eyes;	Possible fulfillment: "And they slaughtered the sons of I before his eyes, then put out I's eyes."	"..." and enter into judgment with him there regarding the unfaithful act which he has committed against Me."
The Lord will scatter those around the prince;	"And all his army was scattered from him."	"All the choice men in all his troops will fall by the sword, and the survivors will be scattered to every wind ..."
"They will know I am the Lord"		"... and you will know that I, the Lord, have spoken."

VERSES 22 – 24: RESTORATION

22. The Lord will now plant a seedling from a cedar in Lebanon
- a. Same terminology as in vss. 3, 4
 - b. The language is analogous to messianic imagery in Isa 11.1; Zech 3.8, although the technical terminology is not the same.
 - i. Here we have the top of a cedar tree
 - ii. In Isa 11 and in Zech 3 we have the image of the "branch" rising from a presumably dead stump.
 - c. The cedar is David's line and the top-most branch the greatest of David's "sons"; i.e., Jesus Christ
23. The "high and lofty mountain of Israel=Mt. Zion (Jerusalem)
- a. Unlike the seedling's becoming a low vine as in vss. 6 – 9, this seedling becomes a stately cedar.
 - b. It brings forth boughs
 - c. It bears fruit

- d. Birds nest on it and under its shade. Birds: imagery applied to a mighty king: Dan 4.10-12, 20 (Cf. Hos 14.5-7; cp. Mk 4.32 for growth from a seed)

24. All the trees will know the Lord

- a. All trees (nations) will know the Lord is doing this.
- b. The Lord will undo the natural order of the strong oppressing the weak:
 - i. I bring down the high tree, exalt the low tree
 - ii. dry up the green tree and make the dry tree flourish.

“I am the Lord; I have spoken, and I will perform it.”

LESSONS:

- A. Do not make oaths in the name of the Lord unless one means it. Cf. Jesus’s words: “Let your *yes* mean yes, and your *no* mean no. Anything more than this comes from the evil one (Mt 5.37 CEB; cf. Mt 23.16, 17).
- B. Like Zedekiah who tried to solve the problem politically rather than spiritually, do we do the same?
 - a. If only Trump were still president!
 - b. If only Hillary had won in 2016!
 - c. If only SCOTUS had taken up the legality of mail-in voting!
 - d. If only the government would break up Big Tech!
 - e. You get the point. But the real problems are ultimately spiritual—the basis of all our actions have to be faithfulness to the Lord, and only Jesus Christ can take care of them.
- C. Judah’s situation was hopeless, but God had given them a “way out,” and that was obedience, as difficult as that seemed to them personally: *Go into exile to Babylon*, BUT pray for the city, for as it prospers, you will prosper (Jer 38-41, esp. 29.7).
- D. Duguid, p. 231: “We build our kingdoms and our lives around our own analysis of the world, seeking to make the contacts and build the relationships we think will prosper us, heedless of God and his word.”