
EZEKIEL 16: 1 Again the LORD's word came to me, saying,

In this chapter the mercy of God to Jerusalem, (or the Jewish Church and nation), is set forth by the emblem of a person that should take up an exposed infant, bring her up with great tenderness, and afterwards marry her, Eze 16:1-14. She is then upbraided with her monstrous ingratitude in departing from the worship of God, and polluting herself with the idolatries of the nations around her, under the figure of a woman that proves false to a tender and indulgent husband, vv. 15-52. But, notwithstanding these her heinous provocations, God promises, after she should suffer due correction, to restore her again to his favor, Eze 16:53-63. The mode of describing apostasy from the true religion to the worship of idols under the emblem of adultery, (a figure very frequent in the sacred canon), is pursued with great force, and at considerable length, both in this and the twenty-third chapter; and is excellently calculated to excite in the Church of God the highest detestation of all false worship.

EZEKIEL 16: 2 Son of man, cause Jerusalem to know her abominations;

Verse 2

Cause Jerusalem to know her abominations - And such a revelation of impurity never was seen before or since. Surely the state of the Jews, before the Babylonish captivity, was the most profligate and corrupt of all the nations of the earth. This chapter contains God's manifesto against this most abominable people; and although there are many metaphors here, yet all is not metaphorical. Where there was so much idolatry, there must have been adulteries, fornications, prostitutions, and lewdness of every description. The description of the prophet is sufficiently clear, except where there is a reference to ancient and obsolete customs. What a description of crimes! The sixth satire of Juvenal is its counterpart. General remarks are all that a commentator is justified in bestowing on this very long, very circumstantial, and caustic invective. For its key, see on Eze 16:13 (note) and Eze 16:63 (note).

EZEKIEL 16: 3 and say, Thus says the Lord GOD to Jerusalem: Your birth and your birth is of the land of the Canaanite; the Amorite was your father, and your mother was a Hittite.

Verse 3

Thy birth and thy nativity is of the land of Canaan - It would dishonor Abraham to say that you sprung from him: ye are rather Canaanites than Israelites. The Canaanites were accursed; so are ye.

Thy father was an Amorite, and thy mother a Hittite - These tribes were the most famous, and probably the most corrupt, of all the Canaanites. So Isaiah calls the princes of Judah rulers of Sodom, Isa 1:10; and John the Baptist calls the Pharisees a generation or brood of vipers, Mat 3:7. There is a fine specimen of this kind of catachresis in Dido's invective against Aeneas: -

Nec tibi Diva parens, generis nec

Dardanus auctor, Perflde; sed duris genuit te cautibus horrens

Caucasus, Hyrcanaeque admorunt ubera tigres.

Aen. lib. 4:365. "False as thou art, and more than false, forsworn;

Not sprung from noble blood, nor goddess born:

But hewn from hardened entrails of a rock, -

And rough Hyrcanian tigers gave thee suck."

Dryden.

This is strong: but the invective of the prophet exceeds it far. It is the essence of degradation to its subject; and shows the Jews to be as base and contemptible as they were abominable and disgusting.

EZEKIEL 16: 4 As for your birth, in the day you were born your navel was not cut, neither were you washed in water to cleanse you; you weren't salted at all, nor swaddled at all.

Verse 4

As for thy nativity, etc. - This verse refers to what is ordinarily done for every infant on its birth. The umbilical cord, by which it received all its nourishment while in the womb, being no longer necessary, is cut at a certain distance from the abdomen: on this part a knot is tied, which firmly uniting the sides of the tubes, they coalesce, and incarnate together. The extra part of the cord on the outside of the ligature, being cut off from the circulation by which it was originally fed, soon drops off, and the part where the ligature was is called the navel. In many places, when this was done, the infant was plunged into cold water; in all cases washed, and sometimes with a mixture of salt and water, in order to give a greater firmness to the skin, and constrict the pores. The last process was swathing the body, to support mechanically the tender muscles till they should acquire sufficient strength to support the body. But among savages this latter process is either wholly neglected, or done very slightly: and the less it is done, the better for the infant; as this kind of unnatural compression greatly impedes the circulation of the blood, the pulsation of the heart, and the due inflation of the lungs; respiration, in many cases, being rendered oppressive by the tightness of these bandages.

EZEKIEL 16: 5 No eye pitied you, to do any of these things to you, to have compassion on you; but you were cast out in the open field, for that your person was abhorred, in the day that you were born.

Verse 5

Thou wast cast out in the open field - This is an allusion to the custom of some heathen and barbarous nations, who exposed those children in the open fields to be devoured by wild beasts who had any kind of deformity, or whom they could not support.

EZEKIEL 16: 6 When I passed by you, and saw you wallowing in your blood, I said to you, Though you are in your blood, live; yes, I said to you, Though you are in your blood, live.

Verse 6

I said - Live - I received the exposed child from the death that awaited it, while in such a state as rendered it at once an object of horror, and also of compassion. - *Modo primos Edere vagitus, et adhuc a matre rubentem.*

EZEKIEL 16: 7 I caused you to multiply as that which grows in the field, and you increased and grew great, and you attained to excellent ornament; your breasts were fashioned, and your hair was grown; yet you were naked and bare.

EZEKIEL 16: 8 Now when I passed by you, and looked at you, behold, your time was the time of love; and I spread my skirt over you, and covered your nakedness: yes, I swore to you, and entered into a covenant with you, says the Lord GOD, and you became mine.

Verse 8

Was the time of love - Thou wast marriageable.

I spread my skirt over thee - I espoused thee. This was one of their initiatory marriage ceremonies. See Rut 3:9.

I - entered into a covenant with thee - Married thee. Espousing preceded marriage.

EZEKIEL 16: 9 Then washed I you with water; yes, I thoroughly washed away your blood from you, and I anointed you with oil.

EZEKIEL 16: 10 I clothed you also with embroidered work, and shod you with sealskin, and I dressed you about with fine linen, and covered you with silk.

Verse 10

I clothed thee also with brodered work - Cloth on which various figures, in various colors, were wrought by the needle.

With badgers'skin - See Exo 25:6. The same kind of skin with which the tabernacle was covered.

Fine linen - *בשש* beshesh, with cotton. I have seen cloth of this kind enveloping the finest mummies.

I covered thee with silk - *משי* meshi. Very probably the produce of the silk-worm.

EZEKIEL 16: 11 I decked you with ornaments, and I put bracelets on your hands, and a chain on your neck.

EZEKIEL 16: 12 I put a ring on your nose, and earrings in your ears, and a beautiful crown on your head.

Verse 12

I put a jewel on thy forehead - *על אפך* *al appech*, upon thy nose. This is one of the most common ornaments among ladies in the east. European translators, not knowing what to make of a ring in the nose, have rendered it, a jewel on thy forehead or mouth, (though they have sometimes a piece of gold or jewel fastened to the center of their forehead.) I have already spoken of this Asiatic custom, so often referred to in the sacred writings: see Gen 24:22, Gen 24:42; Exo 32:2; Job 42:11; Pro 11:22; Isa 3:21; Hos 2:13.

EZEKIEL 16: 13 Thus you were decked with gold and silver; and your clothing was of fine linen, and silk, and embroidered work; you ate fine flour, and honey, and oil; and you were exceeding beautiful, and you prospered to royal estate.

Verse 13

Thus wast thou decked, etc. - The Targum understands all this of the tabernacle service, the book of the law, the sacerdotal vestments, etc.

Thou didst prosper into a kingdom - Here the figure explains itself: by this wretched infant, the low estate of the Jewish nation in its origin is pointed out; by the growing up of this child into woman's estate, the increase and multiplication of the people; by her being decked out and ornamented, her tabernacle service, and religious ordinances; by her betrothing and consequent marriage, the covenant which God made with the Jews; by her fornication and adulteries, their apostasy from God, and the establishment of idolatrous worship, with all its abominable rites; by her fornication and whoredoms with the Egyptians and Assyrians, the sinful alliances which the Jews made with those nations, and the incorporation of their idolatrous worship with that of Jehovah; by her lovers being brought against her, and stripping her naked, the delivery of the Jews into the hands of the Egyptians, Assyrians, and Chaldeans, who stripped them of all their excellencies, and at last carried them into captivity.

This is the key to the whole of this long chapter of metaphors; and the reader will do well to forget the figures, and look at the facts. The language and figures may in many places appear to us exceptionable: but these are quite in conformity to those times and places, and to every reader and hearer would appear perfectly appropriate, nor would engender either a thought or passion of an irregular or improper kind. Custom sanctions the mode, and prevents the abuse. Among naked savages irregular passions and propensities are not known to predominate above those in civilized life. And why? Because such sights are customary, and therefore in themselves innocent. And the same may be said of the language by which such states and circumstances of life are described. Had Ezekiel spoken in such language as would have been called chaste and unexceptionable among us, it

would have appeared to his auditors as a strange dialect, and would have lost at least one half of its power and effect. Let this be the prophet's apology for the apparent indelicacy of his metaphors; and mine, for not entering into any particular discussion concerning them. See also the note on Eze 16:63 (note).

EZEKIEL 16: 14 Your renown went out among the nations for your beauty; for it was perfect, through my majesty which I had put on you, says the Lord GOD.

EZEKIEL 16: 15 But you trusted in your beauty, and played the prostitute because of your renown, and poured out your prostitution on everyone who passed by; his it was.

Verse 15

Thou didst trust in thine own beauty - Riches, strength, alliances, etc.; never considering that all they possessed came from God; therefore it was his comeliness which he had put upon them. Witness their original abject state, and the degree of eminence to which they had arrived afterwards through the protecting power of God.

EZEKIEL 16: 16 You took of your garments, and made for yourselves high places decked with various colours, and played the prostitute on them. This shall not come, neither shall it be.

EZEKIEL 16: 17 You also took your beautiful jewels of my gold and of my silver, which I had given you, and made for yourself images of men, and played the prostitute with them;

Verse 17

And madest to thyself images of men - זכר צלמי tsalmey zachar, male images. Priapi are here meant, which were carried about in the ceremonies of Osiris, Bacchus, and Adonis; and were something like the lingam among the Hindoos. Herodotus, lib. ii, c. 48, 49, gives us an account of these male images: Πηχυαία ἀγάλματα νευροσπαστα, τὰ περιφορεοῦσι κατὰ κωμὰς τὰ γυναικῆς, νεῦρον τοῦ αἰδοῖον, οὐ πολλῶν τεῶν ἐλασσόντων τοῦ ἀλλοῦ σώματος. This was done at the worship of Bacchus in Egypt: and they who wish to see more may consult Herodotus as above. In this phallic worship the women were principally concerned.

EZEKIEL 16: 18 and you took your embroidered garments, and covered them, and set my oil and my incense before them.

Verse 18

Hast set mine oil and mine incense before them - It appears that they had made use of the holy vestments, and the different kinds of offerings which belonged to the Lord, to honor their idols.

EZEKIEL 16: 19 My bread also which I gave you, fine flour, and oil, and honey, with which I fed you, you even set it before them for a pleasant aroma; and so it was, says the Lord GOD.

EZEKIEL 16: 20 Moreover you have taken your sons and your daughters, whom you have borne to me, and you have sacrificed these to them to be devoured. Was your prostitution a small matter,

EZEKIEL 16: 21 that you have slain my children, and delivered them up, in causing them to pass through the fire to them?

Verse 21

To cause them to pass through the fire - Bp. Newcome quotes a very apposite passage from Dionysius Halicarnass. Ant. Romans lib. i., s. 88, p. 72, and marg. p. 75, Edit. Hudson: Μετα δε τουτο, πυρκαϊας προ των σκηνων γενεσθαι κελουσας, εξαγει τον λεων τας φλογας υπερθρωσκοντα, της οσιωσεως των μiasματων ενεκα. "And after this, having ordered that fires should be made before the tents, he brings out the people to leap over the flames, for the purifying of their pollutions." This example shows that we are not always to take passing through the fire for being entirely consumed by it. Among the Israelites this appears to have been used as a rite of consecration.

EZEKIEL 16: 22 In all your abominations and your prostitution you have not remembered the days of your youth, when you were naked and bare, and were wallowing in your blood.

EZEKIEL 16: 23 It has happened after all your wickedness, (woe, woe to you! says the Lord GOD),

EZEKIEL 16: 24 that you have built for yourselves a vaulted place, and have made yourselves a lofty place in every street.

Verse 24

Thou hast also built unto thee an eminent place - גב gab, a stew or brothel; Vulg. lupanar; Septuag. οικημα πορνικον. So my old MS. Bible, a bordel house. "Thou hast builded thy stewes and bordell houses in every place." - Coverdale's Bible, 1636. Bordel is an Italian word: how it got so early into our language I know not. Our modern word brothel is a corruption of it. Diodati translates, Tu hai edificato un bordello, "Thou hast built a brothel." Houses of this kind were of a very ancient date.

EZEKIEL 16: 25 You have built your lofty place at the head of every way, and have made your beauty an abomination, and have opened your feet to everyone who passed by, and multiplied your prostitution.

EZEKIEL 16: 26 You have also committed sexual immorality with the Egyptians, your neighbours, great of flesh; and have multiplied your prostitution, to provoke me to anger.

Verse 26

Great of flesh - The most extensive idolaters. Bene vasatis-longa mensura incognita nervy - Juv. Sat. 9:34. This is the allusion.

EZEKIEL 16: 27 See therefore, I have stretched out my hand over you, and have diminished your portion, and delivered you to the will of those who hate you, the daughters of the Philistines, who are ashamed of your lewd way.

Verse 27

Have diminished thine ordinary - חֻקֶּךָ chukkech means here the household provision made for a wife - food, clothing, and money.

EZEKIEL 16: 28 You have played the prostitute also with the Assyrians, because you were insatiable; yes, you have played the prostitute with them, and yet you weren't satisfied.

EZEKIEL 16: 29 You have moreover multiplied your prostitution to the land of merchants, to Chaldea; and yet you weren't satisfied with this.

EZEKIEL 16: 30 How weak is your heart, says the Lord GOD, since you do all these things, the work of an impudent prostitute;

EZEKIEL 16: 31 in that you build your vaulted place at the head of every way, and make your lofty place in every street, and have not been as a prostitute, in that you scorn pay.

EZEKIEL 16: 32 A wife who commits adultery! who takes strangers instead of her husband!

EZEKIEL 16: 33 They give gifts to all prostitutes; but you give your gifts to all your lovers, and bribe them, that they may come to you on every side for your prostitution.

EZEKIEL 16: 34 You are different from other women in your prostitution, in that no one follows you to play the prostitute; and whereas you give hire, and no hire is given to you, therefore you are different.

EZEKIEL 16: 35 Therefore, prostitute, hear the LORD's word:

EZEKIEL 16: 36 Thus says the Lord GOD, Because your filthiness was poured out, and your nakedness uncovered through your prostitution with your lovers; and because of all the idols of your abominations, and for the blood of your children, that you gave to them;

Verse 36

Thy filthiness was poured out - נְחֻשְׁתֶּךָ nechushtech. As this word signifies a sort of metal, (brass), it is generally supposed to mean money. They had given money literally to these heathen nations to procure their friendship and assistance; but the word also means verdigris, the poisonous rust of copper or brass. It is properly translated in our version filthiness, poisonous filth. Does it not refer to that venereal virus which is engendered by promiscuous connexions?

EZEKIEL 16: 37 therefore see, I will gather all your lovers, with whom you have taken pleasure, and all those who you have loved, with all those who you have hated; I will even gather them against you on every side, and will uncover your nakedness to them, that they may see all your nakedness.

EZEKIEL 16: 38 I will judge you, as women who break wedlock and shed blood are judged; and I will bring on you the blood of wrath and jealousy.

EZEKIEL 16: 39 I will also give you into their hand, and they shall throw down your vaulted place, and break down your lofty places; and they shall strip you of your clothes, and take your beautiful jewels; and they shall leave you naked and bare.

Verse 39

They shall strip thee also of thy clothes - thy fair jewels - Alluding to a lot common enough to prostitutes, their maintainers in the end stripping them of all they had given them.

EZEKIEL 16: 40 They shall also bring up a company against you, and they shall stone you with stones, and thrust you through with their swords.

EZEKIEL 16: 41 They shall burn your houses with fire, and execute judgements on you in the sight of many women; and I will cause you to cease from playing the prostitute, and you shall also give no hire any more.

EZEKIEL 16: 42 So will I cause my wrath toward you to rest, and my jealousy shall depart from you, and I will be quiet, and will be no more angry.

Verse 42

I will be quiet and will be no more angry - I will completely abandon thee; have nothing more to do with thee; think no more of thee. When God in judgment ceases to reprehend, this is the severest judgment.

EZEKIEL 16: 43 Because you have not remembered the days of your youth, but have raged against me in all these things; therefore, behold, I also will bring your way on your head, says the Lord GOD: and you shall not commit this lewdness with all your abominations.

Verse 43

Thou hast not remembered the days of thy youth - Thy former low beginning, when God made thee a people, who wast no people. He who maintains not a proper recollection of past mercies is not likely to abide steadfast in the faith. Ingratitude to God is the commencement, if not the parent, of many crimes.

EZEKIEL 16: 44 Behold, everyone who uses proverbs shall use this proverb against you, saying, As is the mother, so is her daughter.

Verse 44

As is the mother, so is her daughter - כַּאֲמֵה בַתָּהּ keimmah bittah, "As the mother, her daughter." As is the cause, so is the effect. As is the breeding, so is the practice. A silken purse cannot be made out of a swine's ear. What is bred in the bone seldom comes out of the flesh. All such proverbs show the necessity of early holy precepts, supported by suitable example.

EZEKIEL 16: 45 You are the daughter of your mother, who loathes her husband and her children; and you are the sister of your sisters, who loathed their husbands and their children: your mother was a Hittite, and your father an Amorite.

EZEKIEL 16: 46 Your elder sister is Samaria, who dwells at your left hand, she and her daughters; and your younger sister, who dwells at your right hand, is Sodom and her daughters.

Verse 46

Thine elder sister is Samaria, she and her daughters that dwell at thy left - It is supposed that the prophet by Sodom in this place means the Israelites that dwelt beyond Jordan, in the land of the Moabites and Ammonites; or rather of the Moabites and Ammonites themselves. Literally, Sodom could not be called the younger sister of Jerusalem, as it existed before Jerusalem had a name. In looking east from Jerusalem, Samaria was on the left, and Sodom on the right hand; that is, the first was on the north, the second on the south of Jerusalem.

EZEKIEL 16: 47 Yet you have not walked in their ways, nor done after their abominations; but, soon you were more corrupt than they in all your ways.

EZEKIEL 16: 48 As I live, says the Lord GOD, Sodom your sister has not done, she nor her daughters, as you have done, you and your daughters.

EZEKIEL 16: 49 Behold, this was the iniquity of your sister Sodom: pride, fullness of bread, and prosperous ease was in her and in her daughters; neither did she strengthen the hand of the poor and needy.

Verse 49

This was the iniquity of thy sister Sodom - If we are to take this place literally, Sodom was guilty of other crimes besides that for which she appears to have been especially punished; in addition to her unnatural crime, She is charged with pride, luxury, idleness, and uncharitableness; and these were sufficient to sink any city to the bottomless pit.

EZEKIEL 16: 50 They were haughty, and committed abomination before me: therefore I took them away when I saw it.

EZEKIEL 16: 51 Neither has Samaria committed half of your sins; but you have multiplied your abominations more than they, and have justified your sisters by all your abominations which you have done.

EZEKIEL 16: 52 You also, bear you your own shame, in that you have given judgement for your sisters; through your sins that you have committed more abominable than they, they are more righteous than you: yes, be also confounded, and bear your shame, in that you have justified your sisters.

Verse 52

They are more righteous than thou - תצדקנה ממך *tetsuddaknah mimmech*, "They shall be justified more than thou." They are less guilty in the sight of God, for their crimes were not accompanied with so many aggravations. This phrase casts light on Luk 18:14 : "This man went down to his house justified rather than the other." Less blame in the sight of God was attached to him. He always had fewer advantages, and now he was a true penitent; while the other was boasting of what he had done, and what he had not done.

EZEKIEL 16: 53 I will turn again their captivity, the captivity of Sodom and her daughters, and the captivity of Samaria and her daughters, and the captivity of your captives in their midst;

EZEKIEL 16: 54 that you may bear your own shame, and may be ashamed because of all that you have done, in that you are a comfort to them.

EZEKIEL 16: 55 Your sisters, Sodom and her daughters, shall return to their former estate; and Samaria and her daughters shall return to their former estate; and you and your daughters shall return to your former estate.

EZEKIEL 16: 56 For your sister Sodom was not mentioned by your mouth in the day of your pride,

EZEKIEL 16: 57 before your wickedness was uncovered, as at the time of the reproach of the daughters of Syria, and of all who are around her, the daughters of the Philistines, who do despite to you all around.

EZEKIEL 16: 58 You have borne your lewdness and your abominations, says the LORD.

EZEKIEL 16: 59 For thus says the Lord GOD: I will also deal with you as you have done, who have despised the oath in breaking the covenant.

EZEKIEL 16: 60 Nevertheless I will remember my covenant with you in the days of your youth, and I will establish to you an everlasting covenant.

Verse 60

I will remember my covenant - That is, the covenant I made with Abraham in the day of thy youth, when in him thou didst begin to be a nation.

EZEKIEL 16: 61 Then you shall remember your ways, and be ashamed, when you shall receive your sisters, your elder sisters and your younger; and I will give them to you for daughters, but not by your covenant.

Verse 61

Thy sisters, thine elder and thy younger - The Gentiles, who were before the Jews were called, and after the Jews were cast off, are here termed the elder and younger sister. These were to be given to Jerusalem for daughters; the latter should be converted to God by the ministry of men who should spring out of the Jewish Church. The former, who were patriarchs, etc., profited by the Lamb who was slain from the foundation of the world. Among the latter the Gospel was preached, first by Christ and his apostles, and since by persons raised up from among themselves.

But not by thy covenant - This was the ancient covenant, the conditions of which they broke, and the blessings of which they forfeited; but by that new covenant, or the renewal to the Gentiles of that covenant that was made originally with Abraham while he was a Gentile, promising that in his seed all the nations of the earth should be blessed; that covenant which respected the incarnation of Christ, and was ratified by the blood of his cross.

EZEKIEL 16: 62 I will establish my covenant with you; and you shall know that I am the LORD;

EZEKIEL 16: 63 that you may remember, and be confounded, and never open your mouth any more, because of your shame, when I have forgiven you all that you have done, says the Lord GOD.

Verse 63

When I am pacified toward thee - This intimates that the Jews shall certainly share in the blessings of the Gospel covenant, and that they shall be restored to the favor and image of God. And when shall this be? Whenever they please. They might have enjoyed them eighteen hundred years ago; but they would not come, though all things there then ready. They may enjoy them now; but they still choose to shut their eyes against the light, and contradict and blaspheme. As they do not turn to the Lord, the veil still continues on their hearts. Let their elder brethren pray for them.

For a key to the principal metaphors in this chapter, the reader is referred to the note on the thirteenth verse, which, if he regard not, he will neither do justice to himself nor to the prophet. The whole chapter is a tissue of invective; sharp, cutting, and confounding; every where well sustained, in every respect richly merited; and in no case leaving any room to the delinquent for justification or response.