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EZEKIEL 21: 1 the LORD's word came to me, saying,

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The prophet goes on to denounce the fate of Jerusalem and Judea; using signs of vehement grief, to denote the greatness of the calamity, Eze 21:2-7. He then changes the emblem to that of a sharp and bright sword, still denoting the same sad event, Eze 21:8-17; and, becoming yet more explicit, he represents the king of Babylon, who was to be employed by God in this work, as setting out to take vengeance on both the Jews and the Ammonites, for joining with Egypt in a confederacy against him. He is described as standing at the parting of the roads leading to the respective capitals of the Jews and Ammonites; and doubting which to attack first, he commits the decision of the matter to his arts of divination, performed by mingling arrows inscribed with the names of the different nations or cities, and then marching against that whose name was written on the arrow first drawn from the quiver. In this case the name Jerusalem comes forward; and therefore he proceeds against it, Eze 21:18-24. History itself could scarcely be more explicit than this prophecy. The profane prince Zedekiah as then declared to be given up by God, and his kingdom devoted to utter destruction, for that breach of oath of which the prophet foretells he should be guilty, Eze 21:25-27. The remaining verses form a distinct prophecy relating to the destruction of the Ammonites, which was fulfilled about five years after the destruction of Jerusalem, Eze 21:28-32.

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EZEKIEL 21: 2 Son of man, set your face toward Jerusalem, and preach toward the sanctuaries, and prophesy against the land of Israel;

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#### Verse 2

Set thy face toward Jerusalem - This is a continuation of the preceding prophecy; and in this chapter the prophet sets before them, in the plainest language, what the foregoing metaphors meant, so that they could not complain of his parables.

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EZEKIEL 21: 3 and tell the land of Israel, Thus says the LORD: Behold, I am against you, and will draw my sword out of its sheath, and will cut off from you the righteous and the wicked.

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#### Verse 3

Behold, I am against thee - Dismal news! When God is against us, who can be for us?

And will draw forth my sword - War.

And will cut off from thee - The land of Judea.

The righteous and the wicked - All shall be removed from thee. Some shall be cut off - removed by the sword; shall be slain in battle, or by the pestilence; and some shall be cut off - die by the famine; and some shall be cut off - removed from the land by captivity. Now, among the two latter classes there might be many righteous as well as wicked. And when all the provisions were consumed, so that there was no more bread in the city, during the siege by Nebuchadnezzar, the righteous must

have suffered as well as the wicked; for they could not be preserved alive, but by miracle, when there was no bread; nor was their perishing for want any loss to them, because the Lord would take them straight to his glory. And however men in general are unwilling to die, yet there is no instance, nor can there be, of any man's complaint that he got to heaven too soon. Again, if God had permitted none to be carried off captive but the wicked, the case of these would be utterly hopeless, as there would be none to set a good example, to preach repentance, to reprove sin, or to show God's willingness to forgive sinners. But God, in his mercy, permitted many of the righteous to be carried off also, that the wicked might not be totally abandoned, or put beyond the reach of being saved. Hence, both Ezekiel and Daniel, and indeed several others, prophets and righteous men, were thus cut off from the land, and carried into captivity. And how much was God's glory and the good of men promoted by this! What a seed of salvation was sown, even in the heathen countries, by thus cutting off the righteous with the wicked! To this we owe, under God, many of the Psalms, the whole of the Book of Ezekiel, all the prophecies of Daniel, the bright example of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, the decrees passed in favor of the religion of the true God by Nebuchadnezzar, Cyrus, Darius, etc. And to this dispensation of God's merciful providence we owe the Books and example of Ezra and Nehemiah. Where then is the injustice, so loudly declaimed against, of God's thus cutting off from the land of Judea the righteous with the wicked? The righteous were not cut off for the crimes of the wicked, (see chap. 18), nor were these crimes visited upon them, yet several of them shared in the common calamity, but none perished. Those that were removed by a violent death, (and I believe we shall find few such), got a speedier entrance into eternal glory.

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EZEKIEL 21: 4 Seeing then that I will cut off from you the righteous and the wicked, therefore shall my sword go out of its sheath against all flesh from the south to the north:

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Verse 4

From the south to the north - The whole land shall be ravaged from one end to the other.

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EZEKIEL 21: 5 and all flesh shall know that I, the LORD, have drawn my sword out of its sheath; it shall not return any more.

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Verse 5

It shall not return any more - That is, till all the work that I have designed for it is done. Nor did it; for Nebuchadnezzar never rested till he had subdued all the lands from the south to the north, from the Euphrates to the Nile.

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EZEKIEL 21: 6 Sigh therefore, you son of man; with the breaking of your thighs and with bitterness you will sigh before their eyes.

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Verse 6

Sigh - with the breaking of thy loins - Let thy mourning for this sore calamity be like that of a woman in the pains of travail.

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EZEKIEL 21: 7 It shall be, when they tell you, Why do you sigh? that you shall say, Because of the news, for it comes; and every heart shall melt, and all hands shall be feeble, and every spirit shall faint, and all knees shall be weak as water: behold, it comes, and it shall be done, says the Lord GOD.

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Verse 7

Wherefore sighest thou? - The prophet was a sign unto them.

His sighing and mourning showed them how they should act.

All knees shall be weak as water - See the note on Eze 7:17.

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EZEKIEL 21: 8 the LORD's word came to me, saying,

EZEKIEL 21: 9 Son of man, prophesy, and say, Thus says the LORD: Say, A sword, a sword, it is sharpened, and also furbished;

EZEKIEL 21: 10 it is sharpened that it may make a slaughter; it is furbished that it may be as lightning: shall we then make mirth? the rod of my son, it condemns every tree.

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Verse 10

It contemneth the rod of my son - "It," the sword of Nebuchadnezzar, "contemneth the rod," despises the power and influence of my son - Israel, the Jewish people: "Out of Egypt have I called My Son."

As every tree - As all the stocks, kindreds, and nations, over which I have already given him commission. Can the rod of Israel be spared, when the trees of Assyria, Egypt, etc., have been cut down?

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EZEKIEL 21: 11 It is given to be furbished, that it may be handled: the sword, it is sharpened, yes, it is furbished, to give it into the hand of the killer.

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Verse 11

This sword is sharpened - It is prepared for the slaughter, it is furbished; from the French, foubir, to polish, brighten. He shall have splendid victories every where. Some complain of corruption in the original in this place; but I think without sufficient reason.

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EZEKIEL 21: 12 Cry and wail, son of man; for it is on my people, it is on all the princes of Israel: they are delivered over to the sword with my people; strike therefore on your thigh.

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 Verse 12

Smite - upon thy thigh - See on Jer 31:19 (note). So Homer, Il. 15 ver. 113: - Ὡς εἶπεν· αὐτὰρ Ἀρης  
θαλερω πεπληγετο μηρῶ χερσὶ καταπρηνεσσ, ολοφυρομενος δε προσηυδα. "She spake; and, with  
expanded arms his thighs

Smiting, thus sorrowful the god exclaimed."

Cowper.

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EZEKIEL 21: 13 For there is a trial; and what if even the rod that condemns shall be no more? says  
the Lord GOD.

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## Verse 13

Because it is a trial - This will be a trial of strength and skill between the Chaldeans and the Jews;  
and a trial of faith and patience to the righteous.

And what if the sword, (Nebuchadnezzar), contemn even the rod? - Overthrow Zedekiah? It will do  
so; for the regal government of Judea shall be no more. Or, it is tried; that it the sword.

Nebuchadnezzar has already shown himself strong and skillful.

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EZEKIEL 21: 14 You therefore, son of man, prophesy, and strike your hands together; and let the  
sword be doubled the third time, the sword of the deadly wounded: it is the sword of the great one  
who is deadly wounded, which enters into their rooms.

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## Verse 14

Let the sword be doubled the third time - The sword has been doubled, and it shall come the third  
time. Nebuchadnezzar came against Judea Thrice.

1. Against Jehoiakim.
2. Against Jeconiah.
3. Against Zedekiah.

The sword had already been doubled; it is to come now the third time, i.e., against Zedekiah.

The sword of the slain - חרב חללים chereb chalalim, "the sword of the soldiers," of the Chaldeans. So  
in the next clause, חרב חלל הגדול hi chereb chalal haggadol, "it is the sword of that great  
soldier," that eminent king and conqueror. This is the meaning of the word חלל chalal, that is so ill  
rendered in almost every place of its occurrence, in our Version. See Dr. Kennicott.

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EZEKIEL 21: 15 I have set the threatening sword against all their gates, that their heart may melt, and  
their stumblings be multiplied: ah! it is made as lightning, it is pointed for slaughter.

Verse 15

Wrapped up - It is not a blunt sword, it is carefully sharpened and preserved for the slaughter.

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EZEKIEL 21: 16 Gather yourselves together, go to the right, set yourselves in array, go to the left, wherever your face is set.

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Verse 16

Go thee one way or other - Thou shalt prosper, O sword, whithersoever thou turnest; against Ammon, or Judea, or Egypt.

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EZEKIEL 21: 17 I will also strike my hands together, and I will cause my wrath to rest: I, the LORD, have spoken it.

EZEKIEL 21: 18 the LORD's word came to me again, saying,

EZEKIEL 21: 19 Also, you son of man, appoint two ways, that the sword of the king of Babylon may come; they both shall come out of one land: and mark out a place, mark it out at the head of the way to the city.

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Verse 19

Appoint thee two ways - Set off from Babylon, and lay down two ways, either of which thou mayest take; that to the right, which leads to Jerusalem; or that to the left which leads to Rabbath of the Ammonites, Eze 21:20. But why against the Ammonites? Because both they and the Moabites were united with Zedekiah against the Chaldeans, (see Jer 27:3), though they afterwards fought against Judea, Eze 12:6.

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EZEKIEL 21: 20 You shall appoint a way for the sword to come to Rabbah of the children of Ammon, and to Judah in Jerusalem the fortified.

EZEKIEL 21: 21 For the king of Babylon stood at the parting of the way, at the head of the two ways, to use divination: he shook the arrows back and forth, he consulted the teraphim, he looked in the liver.

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Verse 21

For the king of Babylon stood at the parting of the way - He was in doubt which way he should first take; whether to humble the Ammonites by taking their metropolis, Riblath, or go at once against Jerusalem. In this case of uncertainty, he made use of divination. And this was of three kinds: 1. By arrows. 2. By images or talismans. 3. By inspecting the entrails of a sacrifice offered on the occasion.

1. He made bright his arrows. This might be after the manner in which the divination is still practiced among the Arabs. These arrows were without head or wing. They took three. On one they wrote, Command me, Lord. On the second, Forbid me, Lord. The third was blank. These were put in a bag, and the querist put in his hand and took one out. If it was Command me, he set about the business immediately; if it was Forbid me, he rested for a whole year; if it was the blank one, he drew again. On all occasions the Arabs consulted futurity by such arrows. See D'Herbelot, under the word Acadah.

2. As to the images, the Hebrew calls them תרפים teraphim. See the note on Gen 31:19 (note).

3. And as to the liver, I believe it was only inspected to see whether the animal offered in sacrifice were sound and healthy, of which the state of the liver is the most especial indication. When the liver is sound, the animal is healthy; and it would have been a bad omen to any who offered sacrifice, to find that the animal they had offered to their gods was diseased; as, in that case, they would have taken for granted that the sacrifice was not accepted.

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EZEKIEL 21: 22 In his right hand was the lot for Jerusalem, to set battering rams, to open the mouth in the slaughter, to lift up the voice with shouting, to set battering rams against the gates, to cast up mounds, to build forts.

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#### Verse 22

At his right hand was the divination for Jerusalem - He had probably written on two arrows; one, Jerusalem; the other, Riblath; the third, left blank. He drew, and that on which Jerusalem was written came to his hand; in consequence of which he marched immediately against that city. It was ripe for destruction; and had he marched before or after, it would have fallen; but he never considered himself as sure of the conquest till now.

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EZEKIEL 21: 23 It shall be to them as a false divination in their sight, who have sworn oaths to them; but he brings iniquity to memory, that they may be taken.

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#### Verse 23

To them that have sworn oaths - To Zedekiah and his ministers, who had bound themselves by the oath of the Lord to be faithful to the Chaldeans, and to pay them the promised tribute. The oaths may refer, farther, to the alliances formed with the Egyptians, Ammonites, and others. They will not believe that Nebuchadnezzar shall succeed against them, while they expect the powerful assistance of the Egyptians.

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EZEKIEL 21: 24 Therefore thus says the Lord GOD: Because you have made your iniquity to be remembered, in that your transgressions are uncovered, so that in all your doings your sins appear; because you have come to memory, you shall be taken with the hand.

EZEKIEL 21: 25 You, deadly wounded wicked one, the prince of Israel, whose day has come, in the time of the iniquity of the end,

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 Verse 25

And thou profane wicked prince of Israel - Zedekiah, called here profane, because he had broken his oath; and wicked, because of his opposition to God and his prophet.

Whose day is come - Who in a short time shalt be delivered into the hands of thy enemies.

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EZEKIEL 21: 26 thus says the Lord GOD: Remove the turban, and take off the crown; this will not be as it was; exalt that which is low, and abase that which is high.

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## Verse 26

Exalt him that is low - Give Gedaliah the government of Judea.

Abase him that is high - Depose Zedekiah - remove his diadem, and take off his crown.

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EZEKIEL 21: 27 I will overturn, overturn, overturn it: this also shall be no more, until he come whose right it is; and I will give it.

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## Verse 27

I will overturn - I will utterly destroy the Jewish government. Perverted will I make it. Heb. perverted, perverted, perverted I will make it.

Until he come whose - is - מִשְׁפָּט mishpat, the judgment; i.e., till the coming of the son of David, the Lord Jesus; who, in a mystic and spiritual sense, shall have the throne of Israel, and whose right it is. See the famous prophecy, Gen 49:10, and Luk 1:32. The אָוָה avah, which we translate overturn, is thrice repeated here; to point out, say the rabbins, the three conquests of Jerusalem, in which Jehoiakim, Jeconiah, and Zedekiah were overthrown.

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EZEKIEL 21: 28 You, son of man, prophesy, and say, Thus says the Lord GOD concerning the children of Ammon, and concerning their reproach; and say, A sword, a sword is drawn, for the slaughter it is furbished, to cause it to devour, that it may be as lightning;

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## Verse 28

Concerning the Ammonites - They had reproached and insulted Judea in its low estate, see Ezekiel 25. This prophecy against them was fulfilled about five years after the taking of Jerusalem. See Joseph. Ant. lib. 10 c. 11; and Jeremiah 27, 48, 49; Ezekiel 25.

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EZEKIEL 21: 29 while they see for you false visions, while they divine lies to you, to lay you on the necks of the wicked who are deadly wounded, whose day has come in the time of the iniquity of the end.

EZEKIEL 21: 30 Cause it to return into its sheath. In the place where you were created, in the land of your birth, will I judge you.

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Verse 30

I will judge thee - This seems to refer to Nebuchadnezzar, who, after his return from Jerusalem, became insane, and lived like a beast for seven years; but was afterwards restored, and acknowledged the Lord.

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EZEKIEL 21: 31 I will pour out my indignation on you; I will blow on you with the fire of my wrath; and I will deliver you into the hand of brutish men, skilful to destroy.

EZEKIEL 21: 32 You shall be for fuel to the fire; your blood shall be in the midst of the land; you shall be remembered no more: for I, the LORD, have spoken it.

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Verse 32

Thou shalt be no more remembered - The empire of the Chaldeans was destroyed, and the power transferred to the Persians; the Persian empire was destroyed, and given to the Greeks; the Grecian empire was destroyed, and given to the Mohammedans; and the destruction of the Mohammedans is at no great distance.