

# The Visions of Ezekiel

## Lesson 10

### 16. Ezekiel's Sixteenth Assignment from the LORD

#### a) Abomination of the City of Jerusalem

**Eze 16:1 Then the word of the LORD came to me, saying, Eze 16:2 "Son of man, make known to Jerusalem her abominations**

The private conversation between the LORD and Ezekiel was over. It was time for Ezekiel to direct a grave message to the city of Jerusalem concerning the “**abominations**” or *disgusting things* being done by her inhabitants. In this passage, the LORD would have Ezekiel begin the story of Jerusalem with her inception shortly after the events of the Tower of Babel.

#### b) Origination of the City of Jerusalem

##### (1) Parents at Birth

**Eze 16:3 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.**

About 1900 years had passed since the Tower of Babel event occurred where the LORD confused the languages of the family of Noah and sent them out in all directions from the village of Babel to inhabit the world and establish nations according to their different languages. Noah's grandson was named Canaan and he settled in the land we know today as Israel. Canaan had many sons and as each son married a Canaanite tribe developed. Amor and Hitt were two of Canaan's sons. One was the father of the Amorites and the other was the father of the Hittites. A portion of the land was carved out for each tribe. In time, a man from the *Amorite* tribe married a woman from the *Hittite* tribe and one of their sons was named Jebu. He established the *Jebusite* tribe and founded the city of *Jebus* in the current location of Jerusalem. A great and powerful fortress was eventually built there called the *Jebusite Citadel*. It was thought to be impenetrable, but David penetrated it in his seventh year as King of Israel and moved his capital there from Hebron and renamed it Jerusalem.

##### (2) Abandoned at Birth

**Eze 16:4 "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.**

When Jebu established his city, it was just as raw as the tribe of Jebu and all the tribes of Canaan for that matter. No special care was taken in establishing the city at first. The LORD compared it to an unwanted child ignored at birth. Adam Clarke records the following about this verse.

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.<sup>31</sup>

### (3) Castaway at Birth

**Eze 16:5 "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.**

The city of Jebu was like a child abandoned at birth and nothing but a castaway. No one cared about the child, whether it lived or died. Such were the family relations among all the cousins of the Canaanites – none cared for the others. Why? Essential needs were the main reasons. Another mouth to feed meant less for the others who had come before. How strange this thinking is to the western mind, but it is not strange to the eastern mind even to this day. We get excited about the birth of a child in the western world but the eastern world, threatened by a lack of daily supplies, sees another child as an extra burden. Many of them were literally thrown into the fields to die. However, when supplies were plentiful, the newborn children were welcome.

The mention of this birth was not about a human baby, it was about the formation of a new village or city in an already crowded field of tribes vying for land. The sons and grandsons of Canaan were becoming massive tribes who were scooping up land and calling it their own. By the time of the Exodus in 1464 BC, about 464 years after the Tower of Babel division, we find the following names of the Canaanite tribes that had prevailed in the area which would eventually be called the Promised Land: Hittite, Amorite, Perizzite, Jebusite and Girgashite. That is not to say that these are all the Canaanite tribes because others existed to the north, east and south of the land that was to be given to Israel.

### (4) Chosen at Birth

**Eze 16:6 "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!'"**

Continuing the analogy of the child, the LORD saw the castaway and ordered it to “**Live!**” Truly, the life of the child would be in danger as it lay in the open field. The child had not been cleaned from the birthing process but was covered in the blood that accompanied it. But the LORD saw the child and the LORD chose the child.

The original city of Jebus struggled to find its place in the land of the Canaanites. But even in its struggle, the LORD saw it and chose it to be His own city. “**Live,**” He said. We can be assured of one thing in this world and it is, “*When the LORD tells a child of His to live, that child will live, without the help of family, friends or foe!*” The city of Jebus had been established and it was going to live under the favorable eye of the LORD. Nevertheless, every baby will have growing pains as it matures and this city was no different.

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<sup>31</sup> Adam Clarke's Commentary

c) Maturation of the City of Jerusalem  
(1) Days of Her Youth

**Eze 16:7 "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.**

Today, we could adequately paraphrase this verse as, "*She grew like a weed into a beautiful young woman.*" We could also interpret it in the LORD's words, that "*She grew ... into a beautiful young woman just as she was designed to do by the LORD.*" The Hebrew actually says something that is not noticed here. Verse 7 starts with the word *rebabah* and it means *ten thousand*. A literal translation of the verse is this. "*Ten thousand like a plant in the field I made you and you grew and matured and became very beautiful. Breasts were formed and your hair grew but you were naked and bare.*" Our text uses the words, "**naked and bare.**" The Hebrew is simply *'ê-rôm* meaning *naked* and *wə- 'er-yāh* meaning *nakedness*. This makes no sense to the English reader. How can a person be naked nakedness? We must step back and remember, the LORD was speaking about the city of Jerusalem, not an actual woman. The LORD was personifying Jerusalem with a description that all humans could understand, the growth of a human from birth to death. In this case, the LORD personified Jerusalem as a female. In looking at the city of Jerusalem the Hebrew words that we should translate properly as *naked nakedness* mean the following. The first word, *naked*, represented the formation and growth of the city from its establishment by Jebu and its being influenced by the religious bent of the Canaanite gods. The second word, *nakedness*, represented the absence of the LORD's influence in the city. In other words, the city needed her Maker. So, then, from the *days of her youth*, the city was ready for the *days of her marriage*.

(2) Days of Her Marriage  
(a) The Covenant

**Eze 16:8 "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.**

Many of the wonderful commentators of the past direct this verse to the foot of Mount Sinai and the covenant with the *nation of Israel* just after its exit from Egypt. For sure, the LORD made one of the covenants with the *nation of Israel* at Mount Sinai, but He also made covenants with Jacob/Israel, Isaac, Abraham, Noah and Adam and all concerned the LORD's selection of His premier people.

But in this passage, the LORD had taken great strides to tell the history of the *city of Jerusalem*, not the history of the *nation of Israel*. Respectfully, this commentator disagrees with the idea that this passage was the covenant at Mount Sinai. We will redirect it to the time of King David.

After the death of King Saul, the *nation of Israel* was divided. David immediately became the king of the tribe of Judah but Saul's son, Ish-bosheth, became the king of the other eleven tribes. He remained the king for two years until he was murdered. Upon his death, the eleven tribes recognized David as their king.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> 2 Samuel 2 - 5

David had set his capital in the city of Hebron and reigned there for seven and a half years. In the last year of his reign in Hebron he successfully made war against and captured the city of *Jebus* on Mount Zion, called it the *City of David* and renamed it Jerusalem.<sup>33</sup> Soon after, David brought the *Ark of the Covenant* to Jerusalem. It had been sitting in *Baale-judah* for many years during the reign of King Saul.<sup>34</sup> With the *Ark of the Covenant* arriving in Jerusalem, the LORD accepted the city as His permanent home. At that time, the LORD made a covenant with David that was an extension of all the LORD's covenants that had come before.

### (b) The Cleanse

**Eze 16:9 "Then I bathed you with water, washed off your blood from you and anointed you with oil.**

Moving from the personification of the LORD's words in this passage to the reality of what occurred when David captured the city of *Jebus*, David had much work to do. The Canaanite city was filled with fifth and idolatry. It had to be cleansed and redeemed. When the LORD states that he "**anointed you with oil,**" it meant *that the LORD had consecrated the city making it holy and sacred*. Therefore, the LORD changed the heart of the city through a purification process by turning it from a godless place to one that was godly.

### (c) The Clothing

**Eze 16:10 "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.**

In this personification, the *nakedness* of this newly married woman was covered by the finest of clothing available in the world. David, too, began to build the finest of buildings in the world in his new capital. Hiram, the king of Tyre, sent trained carpenters and stonemasons to build the *house of David*, the capital building, in the capital city of the *Nation of Israel*.<sup>35</sup> It was magnificent.

### (d) The Crown

**Eze 16:11 "I adorned you with ornaments, put bracelets on your hands and a necklace around your neck. Eze 16:12 "I also put a ring in your nostril, earrings in your ears and a beautiful crown on your head.**

But for the queen of the king, clothing was not enough. A crown and jewelry to match were needed. The most beautiful women would wear equally beautiful bracelets, necklaces, nose rings, earrings and a crown.

In the western world, we understand completely the listed adornments except for the nose ring. In the past few decades in America, the nose ring has emerged in our culture, but not for the same reason as in this passage. To catch the meaning of the *nose ring* in the Bible and the Hebrew culture we need to return to its first appearance in Genesis 24:47. There, Abraham had sent his trusted servant to Haran to find a wife for Isaac. Once Rebekah was selected, she put a *ring in her nose and bracelets on her wrists*. The two together were a symbol of engagement.

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<sup>33</sup> 2 Samuel 5:6-10; 1 Chronicles 11:4-9, 14:1-7; Psalm 76

<sup>34</sup> 2 Samuel 6:1-11; 1 Chronicles 13:1-6; Psalm 37; 2 Samuel 6:12-23; 1 Chronicles 16:43; Psalm 14; Psalm 15; Psalm 68; Psalm 87; Psalm 101; Psalm 110

<sup>35</sup> 2 Samuel 5:11-12; Psalm 30

Rebekah was engaged to a man she had never met. It was a sign to all men who saw her that her love was promised to one man.

In the same vein, with David's capture of the city, the building and its complexes and the adornments with its banners and ironwork, Jerusalem, without question, belonged to the LORD and the world knew Jerusalem belonged to Him.

#### (e) The Cuisine

**Eze 16:13 "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.**

Adorned in dress and jewels, the beautiful woman was treated to a special diet. The cuisine was "**fine flour, honey and oil.**" Frankly, these three, fine flour, fine honey and fine oil, were not part of the average everyday cuisine; these three were used in the common home as a special treat because they were seasonal and costly. But in the wealthy homes, these three were expected and common. The dietary uses of these three caused the skin to shine with a luster turning the beautiful into the "**exceedingly beautiful.**" At that time, beauty was attached to royalty. The more beautiful, the more royal – even though it may have been pure perception and not fact.

The days of Esther had not occurred at this point in the story of the Bible. Her story will be told in about 100 years after the life of Ezekiel. Yet, because we can read her story in our Bible we can discover the effects of such cuisine as stated here. Esther was put on a year long cuisine and body treatment program that would enhance her beauty to the expected level of the king's requirement. Coming right off the streets of Persia (Iran), she was not ready for her visit with the king. But with a year of this special diet, her skin and beauty would reach the king's demands.<sup>36</sup>

Obviously, the city of Jerusalem was not fed a special diet of flour, honey and oil to beautify her; yet, in a way, she was. As the LORD blessed her, the best of the best came to the city for the use of the people and her reputation spread, elevating her in the eyes of all the kings of the world. How do we know? We must read on.

#### (f) The Celebration

**Eze 16:14 "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.**

And so, Jerusalem, earlier in the covenant with the LORD, was recognized because He had blessed her with His splendor. Jerusalem had experienced being naked, but then it became the richest capital of a nation. What they were seeing was the blessing of the LORD and nothing from Jerusalem's own doing. The celebration of her fame was directly connected to her Husband, the LORD.

### (3) Degradation of the City of Jerusalem

#### (a) Misappropriation of Trust

**Eze 16:15 "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*.**

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<sup>36</sup> Esther 2:3-14

Instant beauty can change even a good heart. For some strange reason, people of certain self-imposed classes dress in certain ways. For instance, what looks good to them may not look good to the rest of the population of the world. As an example, think of the teenagers who fall into the *black* trap. They wear black, they put on black makeup, the walls in their rooms are black, everything is black. And, it is clear, even their hearts are black. Furthermore, no one can influence them to change and, frankly, they care nothing for the LORD. That example is extreme. For a broader example, a popular television show was called “*What Not to Wear.*” Participants on this show would be recommended by family and friends who were appalled by the terrible dress of their friend or loved one. The show included a retraining of the heart and mind of the participant to encourage the participant to wear appropriate clothing. In every case, the drab dress was discarded, the wallflower was turned into the eye turning spotlight, and the self-belittled was turned into the self-accepted. Yet, those lessons were often quickly forgotten after being too quickly gained and the next time the participant purchased clothing, the old comfortable choices returned to be the preferred style of clothing. For others, fame can change even a good heart. Fame is something that can be gained through years of hard work coupled with defined values. Fame does not always mean good, an evil person can also acquire fame. With those thoughts in mind, let us tie the picture together in this passage. First, the city of Jerusalem was a godless city. The Canaanite inhabitants participated in sin without understanding it was a sin. Sin was commonplace for them even though some of their sins were unnatural (men with men and women with women). Unfaithfulness to one spouse was the norm. Unbridled pleasures were sought among the people in normal life. But then, Jerusalem was captured by King David. The rough and rugged lives of the people in the area were transformed with the influence of the godly people of the LORD. The Canaanites were pushed out to the surrounding areas with their gods. The LORD nurtured Jerusalem and she became exceedingly beautiful, royal and famous. The fame came quickly and when it was time to consider the LORD with the next generation of Israelites, the old habits of idol worship returned. The city was influenced by the Canaanites living just past the walls of the city. Instead of trusting in the LORD who made Jerusalem beautiful, the inhabitants of Jerusalem began to *misappropriate the trust* of the LORD. They would rather trust in the bed of an idol than the throne of God.

### (b) Misappropriation of Desires

**Eze 16:16 "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.**

Being acquainted with newfound fame and beauty, Jerusalem used those assets to play the harlot with other gods – *a misappropriation of desires*. A *harlot* is a woman who *seeks to have an inappropriate relationship with someone she is not married to*. The inhabitants of Jerusalem were married to the LORD but they sought an inappropriate relationship with man-made gods. It should never have been. The LORD clothed Jerusalem; Jerusalem used those clothes for the purposes of *harlotry* – *the misappropriation of desires*.

### (c) Misappropriation of Gifts

**Eze 16:17 "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.**

The clothing was not the only gift from the LORD. All the jewels (wealth) possessed by Jerusalem came from the LORD. What did the inhabitants of Jerusalem do with them? They made “**male images.**” Why? So they “**might play the harlot with them.**” The Hebrew word for *images* should be translated *phantoms*. In other words, the Jerusalem inhabitants were fantasizing

about *phantom or imaginary males* that they could commit *adultery with*. The Hebrew word for *harlot* is *zanah* and it means *to enter into an adulterous act*. The gifts of the LORD were cast into gold or silver *phantom* gods to be worshiped. It was a *misappropriation of the gifts*.

#### (d) Misappropriation of Worship

**Eze 16:18 "Then you took your embroidered cloth and covered them, and offered My oil and My incense before them.**

With the idols constructed, the inhabitants of Jerusalem turned from the *misappropriation of gifts* to the *misappropriation of worship*. The LORD had given this woman her clothing, her oil, her incense and she took them and displayed them before the ungodly *phantom* males.

#### (e) Misappropriation of Cuisine

**Eze 16:19 "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.**

But the harlot city of Jerusalem did not stop there, she *misappropriated the cuisine* given to her by the LORD and laid it before the *phantom* males she loved. The **"fine flour, oil and honey"** were provided to make Jerusalem beautiful; the LORD did not intend that they be given to the enemy to make him beautiful. No wonder the LORD was angry.

#### (f) Misappropriation of Children

**Eze 16:20 "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?"**  
**Eze 16:21 "You slaughtered My children and offered them up to idols by causing them to pass through *the fire*.**

The *misappropriation of trust, desires, gifts, worship, and cuisine* was tantamount to outright *abomination*. What could possibly be worse? Something is always worse and it was the addition of the *misappropriation of children*. The LORD said of these children, **"whom you had borne to Me."** The LORD was still personifying the city of Jerusalem as His wife through this chapter. Clearly, the LORD was speaking of the inhabitants of the city, all of Jewish blood. Notice the text uses the word **"borne"** instead of the word *born*. Why does this modern translation use the word **"borne?"** It is because this word does not mean *children who were the offspring* of the inhabitants of Jerusalem and the LORD. It means something else. The word **"borne"** means to *carry or transport*. The etymology of the word in all cases means to *carry, sustain or endure* and in all cases it is never related to a *birth*.

Therefore, when the text states, **"whom you had borne to Me,"** it is a statement by the LORD that these *children* were carried before the LORD, dedicated to Him and then sacrificed before idols in worship. Slaughtered. Passed through *the fire*. The *misappropriated* affection for a *phantom male* to take the place of the LORD was an abomination enough, but the destruction of *children* who were dedicated to the LORD could not be tolerated.

What does **"pass through the fire"** mean? It means these *children* were rolled alive down the blistering hot arms of the bronze idol of Molech only to land in the blazing fire in its belly - child sacrifice. The Canaanite tribe of Ammon was known for its practice of offering its children

to Molech. That practice had crept into the worship in Jerusalem by the time of Ezekiel.<sup>37</sup> Children who belonged to the LORD were burnt alive in the belly of a man-made metal idol!

What could bring all this about? Only the *misappropriation of thoughts*.

(g) Misappropriation of Thoughts

(i) Forgetful Memory

Eze 16:22 **"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.**

Then the LORD said, **"you did not remember the days of your youth."** How quickly those in their youth forget! Their memory is short. Their thoughts are misappropriated. This topic should be so evident that no example should be needed here. But just in case one is needed, the classic example was given by the LORD in the parable of the *Prodigal Son*. The young man had forgotten all that his father had done for him all his life and none of that mattered. He wanted his share of his father's wealth immediately. This greedy son did not care about his father, his mother, his brother, the farm or the family's future. He wanted what did not belong to him and he wanted it instantly. He did not care who had fed and clothed him through the years. He did not know how to plan for the future. He had a sin in his life and it had become the *idol* that consumed his heart. As the Scripture says, the father gave him his portion. He left the home. Squandered everything. Only at the point of desperation did his memory kick in! *"What have I done? Why did I do what I have done? Even the hired help on dad's farm has it better than I!"*

In 591 BC, the inhabitants of Jerusalem had not come to the point of desperation. They were still wanting what they thought they were entitled to receive. But they were not entitled any longer! Why? It was because they had forgotten what the LORD had done for them. In reality, they had forgotten the LORD – *a misappropriation of thought, a forgetful memory* that should have been remembered.

(ii) Fanciful Shrine

Eze 16:23 **"Then it came about after all your wickedness (~~'Woe, woe to you!' declares the Lord GOD~~),** <sup>Eze 16:24</sup> **that you built yourself a shrine and made yourself a high place in every square.**

Along the way in life, the inhabitants of the city of Jerusalem had indulged in **"wickedness."** The word in Hebrew means *evil deeds*. Idolatry, the intentional worship of an *idol*, is the apex of all *evil deeds* in the eyes of the LORD. The *evil deeds* in one's heart is bad enough but man cannot leave them there; he has to flaunt them in the face of everyone. Today, we post them on billboards, plaster them on bumper stickers, display them on posters, carry them in picket lines and worst of all, we allow our televisions to fill our homes with sounds of *evil* and our car radios provide the means for us to travel with *evil* mile after mile. In Ezekiel's day, they posted the object of their *evil deeds* on the corners of every street in the form of **"shrines."** A shrine is a model, carved in wood, stone or metal, of the image of something that is worshiped – an idol. Some shrines were as large as magnificent temples, others were nothing more than carved images on small pedestals placed in the **"square"** meaning *a plaza or open space*. These shrines were always placed where they could be seen by all. They were not hidden behind a bush, around a corner or in a closet. The *evil* symbol was in plain sight and it could not be ignored.

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<sup>37</sup> 2 Kings 21:6; Jeremiah 7:30-31; 32:32-35.

Finally, the *shrines* were never simple or plain, they were always *fanciful*, decorated – ornate – gaudy.

### (iii) Faithful Lust

Eze 16:25 **"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.**

Idolaters built their *shrines* in *high places* so they could easily be seen. Why? Their intent was to attract as many followers as possible. According to Holman's Bible Dictionary, the *high places* of heathen worship was as follows.

The average high place would have an altar (2 Kings 21:3; 2 Chron. 14:3), a carved wooden pole that depicted the female goddess of fertility (Asherah), a stone pillar symbolizing the male deity (2 Kings 3:2), other idols (2 Kings 17:29; 2 Chron. 33:19), and some type of building (1 Kings 12:31; 13:32; 16:32-33). At these places of worship the people sacrificed animals (at some high places children were sacrificed according to Jer. 7:31), burned incense to their gods, prayed, ate sacrificial meals, and were involved with male or female cultic prostitutes (2 Kings 17:8-12; 21:3-7; Hos. 4:11-14). Although most high places were part of the worship of Baal, the Ammonite god Molech and the Moabite god Chemosh were also worshiped at similar high places (1 Kings 11:5-8; 2 Kings 23:10).<sup>38</sup>

The *shrines* were purposeful. The LORD used the words **"beauty abominable."** What does that mean? We are all drawn to those who are considered *beautiful*. It seems that everyone wants to be a part of the *beautiful people club*. Frankly, some people are just naturally *beautiful*. But *beauty* extends to so many other things than just people. We can speak of beautiful animals, objects, scenery, but most important - *deeds*. *Beautiful deeds!* The things people do!

However, *beautiful deeds* can be used for evil purposes. Because of the context of this verse, the following example is appropriate. The sexual relationship between a husband and wife is a *beautiful deed* - holy, righteous, godly. The sexual relationship outside of marriage is an *abominable deed*. **"Abominable"** means *abhorred*. We do not use that word often today in common conversations; therefore, a better understanding of **"abominable"** would be a combination of *disgust and hate*. The same sexual relationship that is *beautiful in marriage* is *disgusting and hated* by the LORD when it is performed outside of marriage. What is the difference in the physical deed – nothing! The difference is found in the purpose. One fulfills the LORD's Will, the other is blatantly out of the LORD's Will. The world has been filled with this blatant evil against the LORD since before Noah's flood. Most sadly, the flood did not change the way humans think. The godliest of the godly people are not guaranteed that their children will be godly. Each generation has been flooded with the sexual temptation since long before the flood. The temptation is especially great in the developing years when a person is too young to be old and too old to be young. Too young to make their own ways and be totally independent; too old not to know better.

Then the LORD spelled out the *evil deeds* in graphic words, **"you spread your legs to every passer-by to multiply your harlotry."** The inhabitants of Jerusalem had metaphorically *spread their legs like a prostitute*, exposing to those who passed by them the most private and intimate parts of their bodies and offered them for lustful pleasure. *"See what I have. Do you want to partake?"* Evil deeds! That which should be used for *beauty*, flaunted for *evil!*

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<sup>38</sup> Holman Bible Dictionary. *High Place*

This *faithful lusting* was on the part of the inhabitants of Jerusalem. They were the ones seeking the *evil deeds*. Those passing by did not expect to see what they saw and be tempted as they were. Here we must stop to remind ourselves of the revelation of God's Word in the world up to the time of Ezekiel. The events that occurred in the first eleven chapters of the book of Genesis were worldwide and known by every culture and nation of the world. All knew the stories of creation, the flood and the Tower of Babel. After the tower event, Europe, Africa, the Near East, the Far East, and India were developing many miles from the Genesis stories that focused on Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and their heirs. Those stories were localized to that line of relatives and not widely known. With the coming of the stories that involved Moses, the LORD chose His elected people and gave them the written Word of His Will in what we call Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy. These writings were for the LORD's elect. Anywhere in the Scripture where the word *elect* is used, it is a reference to the descendants of Jacob known as the *Nation of Israel*. It is never a reference to all the rest of the people who were alive in the world. The Bible is a book about the LORD, His purpose and His plan. In His plan He needed to select a family of His choosing and He called them His *elect*. When the time was right, the LORD would come to earth in the form of a baby to live and give His life in the ultimate sacrifice for sin. All of this was part of His plan before the foundation of the world. Continuing, the writings of Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Samuel, 1<sup>st</sup> Kings and much of 2<sup>nd</sup> Kings were in place as well as most of Psalms, all of Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Jonah, Nahum, Amos, and Micah. All of these writings were about God's interaction with His *elect people* and in some cases, as with Jonah and Nahum, God's interaction with nations that He was sending to chastise his *elect*. The rules of righteousness set forth in all the writings listed above applied only to the *Nation of Israel – the elect* and no other people. Therefore, the *sexual deeds* and actions of the Egyptians, Assyrians, Babylonians, Africans, Romans, Greeks, *et al*, were not governed by the *laws of sexuality* specifically found in the book of Leviticus. The purpose of that book was to instruct the *Nation of Israel* how to live godly in an ungodly world, that is, how to be holy in a wicked world as the *elect chosen nation of the LORD*. The message of the Old Testament would not be given to the world to become the standard anthology of morality of *good and evil* until the *Nation of Israel* totally rejected the LORD. Then He directed the message to be offered to the *Gentiles* and the promise to *whosoever will may come!*

Therefore, when all the nations of the world passed by Jerusalem and saw her exposing her most private parts, offering them to all who would partake, the nations had no concept that entering into an ungodly relationship with her was wrong – they simply did not know better! All they did was allow her to **“increase her prostitution”** with more suiters.

#### (iv) Your Suiters

**Eze 16:26 "You also played the harlot with the Egyptians, your lustful neighbors, and multiplied your harlotry to make Me angry.**

How did the LORD feel about His metaphorical wife entering into a personal relationship with the nation of Egypt? It made Him **“angry.”** The *lustfulness* of the suiter of a harlot is an interesting scenario. The suiter can be on his way in the common course of the business of life when in an instant, the flicker of his eye catches the exposed private parts of the harlot and the mind is distracted. The view is tempting. The viewing of the exposed private part is not the sin but the longing to indulge and partake in that opportunity is sin. No sin occurs when the accidental view occurs and the eye moves on down the path to continue in the common course of business. But sin does occur when the suiter leaves his planned path to step onto the plaza of the *high place* and indulge. A sinful opportunity that dangles in front of you is not a sin; reaching

out to grasp that dangling opportunity is the sin. Partaking in sin makes the LORD “angry.” He was angry enough to punish the city as well as her inhabitants.

#### (4) Punished by God

##### (a) For Lewd Conduct

**Eze 16:27 "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."**

The LORD says, “Behold,” which means *pay attention to this!* He was going to “diminish” the rations meaning *the allotment of food*. Famine was on the way! The ordinary household provisions would be limited. How would that be accomplished by the LORD? Through the “daughters of the Philistines.” What do we know about the Philistines? They were a group of people who occupied a small sliver of land to the west of Jerusalem next to the Mediterranean Sea. From the earliest of days, this group was a thorn in the flesh of the *Nation of Israel*. They are known today as the Palestinians and are still a thorn in the flesh of *Israel*.

The *Philistines* were a transplanted group of people from the area of Tyre and Sidon 150 miles north of the Gaza strip. They were sea-going people, sailors who transported goods to people around the Mediterranean Sea. But the group that moved south had slowly abandoned their sea going efforts. Nevertheless, the cities that were developed in the Gaza Strip were daughter cities to those in the Phoenician area to the north where the original family settled after the Tower of Babel. The *Philistines* hated the Israelites because of their “lewd conduct.” Many readers run past these words too quickly. Today, when we see the words “lewd conduct,” we think of something that is *sexually crude and offensive*. In the context, that thought seems to fit with this passage; however, that is not the intended definition. The metaphor may be that of a sexually active adulterous woman but the intent is to explain the actions of the people. Scholars tell us that the word for “lewd” is *zimmah* and it means *a plan*. They also tell us that the word for “conduct” is *derek* and it means *a way, road, distance, or journey*. Therefore, the phrase translated “who are ashamed of your lewd conduct” is better translated “*who are ashamed of your planned journey*.” The *Philistines* hated the Israelites; they always hated the Israelites; nothing was new about their hatred of the Israelites. They did not like the Israelites when they were in God’s will or when they were out of God’s will. With the oncoming famine, the LORD put the Israelites at a disadvantage and the *Philistines* would love to take advantage of that!

##### (b) For Dissatisfaction

###### (i) Choosing Assyria Instead

**Eze 16:28 "Moreover, you played the harlot with the Assyrians because you were not satisfied; you played the harlot with them and still were not satisfied."**

Oh, how the LORD was unhappy with the inhabitants of Jerusalem. The nations near the city were not enough to *satisfy* her desire; therefore, she sought relationships with the residue of the old Assyrian Empire, but that did not satisfy. A point of application to make at this juncture is this, *unsatisfied people are unsatisfied all the time and nothing will ever satisfy them for long*. Choosing Assyria instead of the LORD just made things worse for Jerusalem.

###### (ii) Choosing Chaldea Instead

**Eze 16:29 "You also multiplied your harlotry with the land of merchants, Chaldea, yet even with this you were not satisfied.""**

When going around the fertile crescent from the Promised Land, Assyria was the first stop. When satisfaction was not found there, the Israelites continued the *plan of their journey* further

out to the land of Chaldea. We know it was the Babylonian Empire. With all the buyers and sellers of merchandise in Babylon, the wealthiest city in the world at that time, even that relationship did not bring satisfaction. Just to recapitulate a point of application to make at this juncture, *unsatisfied people are unsatisfied all the time and nothing will ever satisfy them for long – not even wealth!*

(c) For Languishing Actions

(i) With the Heart

**Eze 16:30 "How languishing is your heart," declares the Lord GOD, "while you do all these things, the actions of a bold-faced harlot.**

The Hebrew word for “**languishing**” means *decay*. The heart was sick in spite of the outward signs of “**bold-faced**” (domineering) strength. Jerusalem was dying on the inside, partying on the outside – *like a harlot*.

(ii) With the Worship

**Eze 16:31 "When you built your shrine at the beginning of every street and made your high place in every square, in disdain of money, you were not like a harlot.**

Harlots or prostitutes do their work for pay, but the inhabitants of Jerusalem did not want money – *unlike a harlot*. Their intent was different.

(iii) With the Stranger

**Eze 16:32 "You adulteress wife, who takes strangers instead of her husband!**

Alas, we come to the root of the LORD’s disgust with Jerusalem and we should not run past it too quickly. This *unfaithful wife* preferred “**strangers instead of her husband.**” Strangers! Who are “strangers?” They are the *unknown*. Instead of loving the husband who knew, she preferred the *unknown* men who pass by her as she displayed herself in public. She knew nothing about them, nothing about their character, their background, their values or their desires, where they had been, where they were going, what they had done or what they would do. Jerusalem was spiritually a *nymphomaniac*.

And so it was with Jerusalem as she desired the idol gods of the Philistines, Egyptians, Assyrians and Canaanites. They were make-believe gods that she did not know but she preferred them to the God she did know and that made the LORD angry.

(iv) With the Bribes

**Eze 16:33 "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. Eze 16:34 "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."**

Normally a harlot or prostitute *works for hire*. Men pay them, but that was not the case with Jerusalem. This harlot lured her “**lovers**” in with gifts, with bribes. Something was definitely wrong with this woman – Jerusalem. Her “**lovers**” were the nations around her that she embraced with open arms. They did not come alone; they brought their detestable *idols*.