

# EZEKIEL

## Chapter 12

### *Two Symbolic Representations for the Flight from the Besieged City*

The word of the LORD also came unto me, saying, Son of man, thou dwellest in the midst of a rebellious house, which have eyes to see, and see not; they have ears to hear, and hear not: for they are a rebellious house. Therefore, thou son of man, prepare thee stuff for removing, and remove by day in their sight; and thou shalt remove from thy place to another place in their sight: it may be they will consider, though they be a rebellious house. Then shalt thou bring forth thy stuff by day in their sight, as stuff for removing: and thou shalt go forth at even in their sight, as they that go forth into captivity. Dig thou through the wall in their sight, and carry out thereby. In their sight shalt thou bear it upon thy shoulders, and carry it forth in the twilight: thou shalt cover thy face, that thou see not the ground: for I have set thee for a sign unto the house of Israel. And I did so as I was commanded: I brought forth my stuff by day, as stuff for captivity, and in the even I digged through the wall with mine hand; I brought it forth in the twilight, and I bare it upon my shoulder in their sight. (Ezekiel 12:1-7)

**Removal of Stuff (1-7):** Ezekiel is mimicking what the people of Jerusalem will encounter when their city is besieged. Ezekiel by day and by night is told to “prepare stuff for removal.” He is to do this in “their sight” showing that this is a sign for the people (6). He is to depart through the wall, showing the urgency by which they will depart the city.

And in the morning came the word of the LORD unto me, saying, Son of man, hath not the house of Israel, the rebellious house, said unto thee, What doest thou? Say thou unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD; This burden concerneth the prince in Jerusalem, and all the house of Israel that are among them. Say, I am your sign: like as I have done, so shall it be done unto them: they shall remove and go into captivity. And the prince that is among them shall bear upon his shoulder in the twilight, and shall go forth: they shall dig through the wall to carry out thereby: he shall cover his

face, that he see not the ground with his eyes. My net also will I spread upon him, and he shall be taken in my snare: and I will bring him to Babylon to the land of the Chaldeans; yet shall he not see it, though he shall die there. And I will scatter toward every wind all that are about him to help him, and all his bands; and I will draw out the sword after them. And they shall know that I am the LORD, when I shall scatter them among the nations, and disperse them in the countries. But I will leave a few men of them from the sword, from the famine, and from the pestilence; that they may declare all their abominations among the heathen whither they come; and they shall know that I am the LORD. (Ezekiel 12:8-16)

**This Burden is Concerning the Prince of the People (8-16):** Not only are these symbolic acts for the people but for the “prince of the people.” This is for Zedekiah himself. To better understand the prophetic fulfillment of this passage of scripture lets remind ourselves of some things regarding Zedekiah.

Zedekiah was Judah’s last king; the youngest son of Josiah and Hamutal (Jer. 1:3; 37:1) and brother to Jehoahaz (2 Kings 24:17,18; 23:31). He was ten years old when his father died, 21 when he ascended the throne.

Originally named Mattaniah, Nebuchadnezzar changed his name to Zedekiah when he deposed Zedekiah’s nephew, Jehoiachin. This act of changing his name shows the loyalty that was entrusted to Zedekiah by Nebuchadnezzar. Zedekiah made a covenant of loyalty with Nebuchadnezzar to which Zedekiah swore by God to keep (Ezek. 17:12-16; 2 Chron. 36:13).

Zedekiah however did not keep his oath of loyalty to Nebuchadnezzar and as a result brought ruin on his country and on himself.

**And the prince that is among them shall bear upon his shoulder in the twilight, and shall go forth: they shall dig through the wall to carry out thereby: he shall cover his face, that he see not the ground with his eyes. My net also will I spread upon him, and he shall be taken in my snare: and I will bring him to Babylon to the land of the Chaldeans; yet shall he not see it, though he shall die there. (Ezekiel 12:12-13)**

**Prophetic Verses Fulfilled (12-13):** In these verses Zedekiah, the prince of the people, is in view. Verse 12 refers to Zedekiah disguising himself and exiting Jerusalem through an exit in the palace:

**And it came to pass, that when Zedekiah the king of Judah saw them, and all the men of war, then they fled, and went forth out of the city by night, by the way of the**

**king's garden, by the gate betwixt the two walls: and he went out the way of the plain. (Jeremiah 39:4)**

In verse 13, there is an amazing fulfillment of prophecy concerning Zedekiah. Verse 13 plainly states that Zedekiah will be taken into Babylon, the land of the Chaldeans, yet he shall not see it, though he shall die there:

**My net also will I spread upon him, and he shall be taken in my snare: and I will bring him to Babylon to the land of the Chaldeans; yet shall he not see it, though he shall die there. (Ezekiel 12:13)**

Ezekiel sends this prophecy to Jerusalem where Zedekiah sees an apparent discrepancy in the prophecy of Jeremiah, who wrote:

**And Zedekiah king of Judah shall not escape out of the hand of the Chaldeans, but shall surely be delivered into the hand of the king of Babylon, and shall speak with him mouth to mouth, and his eyes shall behold his eyes; And he shall lead Zedekiah to Babylon, and there shall he be until I visit him, saith the LORD: though ye fight with the Chaldeans, ye shall not prosper. (Jeremiah 32:4-5 cf. 34:3)**

The amazing fulfillment of these passages is seen through the writings of the historian Josephus, in which he records the following:

#### **Flavius Josephus, Antiquities, book 10 chapter 7**

*Now Zedekiah was twenty-and-one years old when he took the government and has the same mother with his brother Jehoiachin, but was a despiser of justice and of his duty, for truly those of the same age with him were wicked about him and the whole multitude did what unjust and insolent things they pleased.*

*... for which reason the prophet Jeremiah came often to him, and protested to him, and insisted that he must leave off his impieties and transgressions and take care of what was right, neither give ear to the rulers (among whom were wicked men) nor give credit to their false prophets who deluded them, as if the king of Babylon would make no more war against him, and as if the Egyptians would make war against him, and conquer him, since what they said was not true; and the events would not prove such.*

*Now as Zedekiah himself, while he heard the prophet speak, he believed him, and agreed to everything as true, and supposed it was for his advantage; but then his friends perverted him,*

*and dissuaded him from what the prophet advised, and obliged him to do what they pleased.*

*Ezekiel also foretold in Babylon what calamities were coming upon, which when he heard he sent accounts of them unto Jerusalem; but Zedekiah did not believe their prophecies, for the reason following – it happened that the two prophets agreed with one another in what they said as in all other things, that the city should be taken, and Zedekiah himself should be taken captive; but Ezekiel disagreed with him, and said that Zedekiah should not see Babylon; while Jeremiah said to him, that the king of Babylon should carry him away thither in bonds.*

*... and because they did not both say the same thing as to this circumstance, he disbelieved what they both appeared to agree in, and condemned them as not speaking truth therein, although all the things foretold him did come to pass according to their prophecies, as we shall show upon a fitter opportunity.*

#### **Flavius Josephus, Antiquities, book 10 chapter 8**

*Now the city was taken on the ninth day of the fourth month, in the eleventh year of the reign of Zedekiah. They were indeed only generals of the king of Babylon, to whom Nebuchadnezzar committed the care of the siege, for he abode himself in the city of Riblah.*

*... and when the city was taken about midnight, and the enemy's generals were entered into the temple, and when Zedekiah was sensible of it, he took his wives and children, and his captains and friends and with them fled out of the city; through the fortified ditch and through the desert;*

*... and when certain of the deserters had informed the Babylonians of this at break of day, they made haste to pursue after Zedekiah, and overtook him not far from Jericho, and encamped him about. But for those friends and captains of Zedekiah who had fled out of the city with him, when they saw their enemies near them they left him and dispersed themselves, some one way and some another, and everyone resolved to save themselves.*

*... so the enemy took Zedekiah alive, when he was deserted by all but a few, with his children and his wives, and brought him to the king. When he was come, Nebuchadnezzar began to call him a wicked wretch, and covenant-breaker, and one that had forgotten his former words, when he promised to keep the country for him.*

*He also reproached him for his ingratitude, that when he had received the kingdom from him, who had taken it from Jehoiachin, and given it him, he had made use of the power he gave him against him that gave it: "but" said he, "God is great, who hateth that conduct of thine, hath brought thee under us"*

*And when he had used these words to Zedekiah, he commanded his sons and his friends to be*

*slain, while Zedekiah and the rest of the captains looked on; after which he put out the eyes of Zedekiah, and bound him and carried him to Babylon.*

*And these things happened to him, as Jeremiah and Ezekiel had foretold to him, that he should be caught, and brought before the king of Babylon, and should speak to him face to face, and should see his eyes with his own eyes; and thus far did Jeremiah prophecy. But he was also made blind, and brought to Babylon but did not see it, according to the prediction of Ezekiel.*

Thus, the amazing fulfilment of this seeming discrepancy is that upon Zedekiah's fleeing from the Babylonian armies invading Jerusalem he is captured by Nebuchadnezzar's armies. At the city of Riblah Nebuchadnezzar slew the sons of Zedekiah and then took out the eyes of Zedekiah. Zedekiah was then taken into Babylon fulfilling both prophecies:

**But the Chaldeans' army pursued after them, and overtook Zedekiah in the plains of Jericho: and when they had taken him, they brought him up to Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon to Riblah in the land of Hamath, where he gave judgment upon him. Then the king of Babylon slew the sons of Zedekiah in Riblah before his eyes: also the king of Babylon slew all the nobles of Judah. Moreover he put out Zedekiah's eyes, and bound him with chains, to carry him to Babylon. (Jeremiah 39:5 - 7)**

**Moreover the word of the LORD came to me, saying, Son of man, eat thy bread with quaking, and drink thy water with trembling and with carefulness; And say unto the people of the land, Thus saith the Lord GOD of the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and of the land of Israel; They shall eat their bread with carefulness, and drink their water with astonishment, that her land may be desolate from all that is therein, because of the violence of all them that dwell therein. And the cities that are inhabited shall be laid waste, and the land shall be desolate; and ye shall know that I am the LORD. (Ezekiel 12:17-20)**

**Another Symbolic Act of the Violence About to Ensur (17-20):** Ezekiel is to eat his bread with quaking, and drink his water with trembling and carefulness (18). This is to show the fearfulness that the people of Jerusalem will experience upon seeing the violence that the Babylonian armies will employ in taking the city, as well as the rationing of water during the siege.

And the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, Son of man, what is that proverb that ye have in the land of Israel, saying, The days are prolonged, and every vision faileth? Tell them therefore, Thus saith the Lord GOD; I will make this proverb to cease, and they shall no more use it as a proverb in Israel; but say unto them, The days are at hand, and the effect of every vision. For there shall be no more any vain vision nor flattering divination within the house of Israel. For I am the LORD: I will speak, and the word that I shall speak shall come to pass; it shall be no more prolonged: for in your days, O rebellious house, will I say the word, and will perform it, saith the Lord GOD. Again the word of the LORD came to me, saying, Son of man, behold, they of the house of Israel say, The vision that he seeth is for many days to come, and he prophesieth of the times that are far off. Therefore say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD; There shall none of my words be prolonged any more, but the word which I have spoken shall be done, saith the Lord GOD. (Ezekiel 12:21-28)

**A Proverb in Israel (21-28):** "The days are prolonged and every vision faileth", this was the proverb that was propagated through Jerusalem. The proverb was stating that the days of judgment against Jerusalem would not come to pass in their day, and that the visions of God's prophets have failed. God however states that He will cause this proverb to cease by bringing His prophecies to pass in their day (23-25). This issue will be elaborated on in the following chapter, as we will see that it was the false prophets in the land of Jerusalem that devised this proverb out of their own hearts (13:1-3).