The Book of Ezekiel

Lesson 23-Chapter Thirteen (Ezekiel 14:1-11)

Executive Summary

This briefing document provides an in-depth analysis of Ezekiel 14:1–11 based on the teaching exposition by Dr. Luther Ray Smith. The passage addresses a pivotal confrontation between the prophet Ezekiel and the elders of Israel regarding secret heart-idolatry, divine judgment, and the nature of prophetic deception.

I. Detailed Analysis of Ezekiel 14:1–11

- **Confrontation of the Elders (Ezekiel 14:1–3)**
- **The Setting:** Elders of Israel—leaders who held significant influence among the exiles—came to Ezekiel and sat down before him.
- **The Divine Exposure:** God reveals to Ezekiel that these men have set up idols in their *lēḇ* (inner faculties of will and reasoning) and placed the "stumbling block of their iniquity" directly before their faces.
- **The Interrogative Challenge:** God asks, "Should I be consulted by them at all?" God refuses to allow Himself to be influenced or guided by men whose perceptions are shaped by non-existent blocks of wood.



II. The Mandate to Reject Idols (Ezekiel 14:4–6)

- **Direct Answer to the Inquirer:** When an idolatrous man approaches the prophet, God will answer him not as if his idols are legitimate, but explicitly in light of the multitude of his idols.
- **Objective of the Answer:** God's intent is to "lay hold of [*ʾtāpaś**] the hearts of the house of Israel who are estranged [*zûr*] from Me through all their idols."*
- **Reinterpreting Repentance (v. 6):** God commands: "Repent [*šûḇ*] and turn away from your idols and turn your faces away from all your abominations..."
    - Exegetical Insight: Rather than applying modern theological baggage to "repent," šûḇ (in the causative *Hiphil* stem) is clearer when understood as a directive to **reject** or **discard** idols and the corrupt doctrines/activities they promote.

III. The Judgment on Inquirers and Gentile Immigrants (Ezekiel 14:7–8)

- **Scope of Responsibility:** The divine decree applies universally—to both native descendants of the house of Israel and Gentile immigrants (gār) living in Israel who identify with the God of Israel.
- **The Penalty:** If anyone sets up idols in his heart, separates himself from God, and seeks a word from a prophet, God will answer that person "in My own person" (according to His own standard):
    - God will set His face against that individual.
    - God will cut him off from among His people.
    - The individual will be made a visible **sign** (*ôṯ*) and a warning **proverb** (*ʾmāšāl*), mirroring the judgment against lying prophets outlined in Ezekiel 13:9.

IV. The Theological Problem of the Deceived Prophet (Ezekiel 14:9)

Ezekiel 14:9 introduces a challenging statement regarding prophetic deception:

"But if the prophet is prevailed upon to speak a word, it is I, the LORD, who have prevailed upon that prophet, and I will stretch out My hand against him and destroy him from among My people Israel."

Exegetical Resolution: Why Does God Persuade a Prophet and Then Destroy Him?
The passive Pual verb ʾpāṯâ indicates that the prophet is "persuaded" or "deceived." God utilizing or allowing this deception is a recognized pattern across Hebrew Scripture designed to **examine and test** both the prophet and the people:

1. **Deuteronomy 13:1–3 — The Test of Signs and Wonders:** God permits signs or wonders from dreamers/prophets to come true to test whether Israel loves the LORD with all their heart (lēḇ), specifically when those prophets advocate following other gods.
2. **Deuteronomy 18:20–22 — Presumptuous Speech:** Any prophet who presumes to speak a word in God's name that was not commanded, or speaks in the name of other gods, is subject to capital punishment.

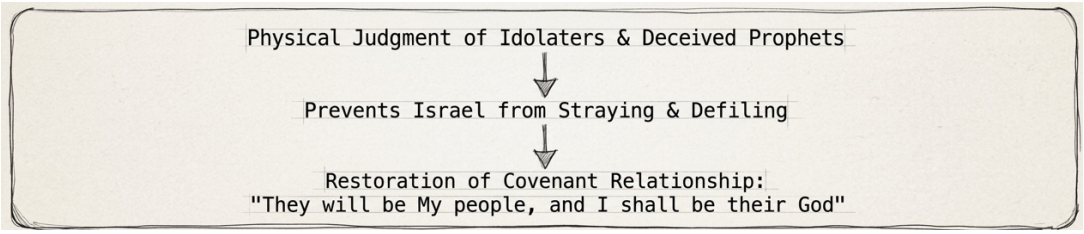
3. **1 Kings 22:19–23 — The Enticing Spirit:** Prophet Micaiah describes a heavenly vision where the LORD permits a deceiving spirit to entice King Ahab through the mouths of his false prophets to bring about Ahab's downfall at Ramoth-gilead.

Conclusion: Prophets serve as God's official "mouthpiece." When a prophet who has already adopted idols in his heart is "prevailed upon" to speak, it serves as a divine test. If the prophet fails to adhere to the Law of Moses, it proves he is not operating on God's behalf. Consequently, God executes physical judgment on that prophet, making him a public example.

V. Ultimate Purpose of Divine Retribution (Ezekiel 14:10–11)

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- **Shared Guilt:** Ezekiel 14:10 confirms that the liability is equal: "They will bear the punishment of their iniquity; as the iniquity of the inquirer is, so the iniquity of the prophet will be."
- **The Primary Redemptive Objective:** God's physical punishment of idolatrous inquirers and false prophets is not purely punitive, but corrective and preventive for the broader community.



As stated in verse 11, the final aim is "that the house of Israel may no longer stray from Me and no longer defile themselves with all their transgressions. Thus they will be My people, and I shall be their God,' declares the Lord GOD."

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Text	Main Theme	Relevance to Ezekiel 14
Ezekiel 13:9	Judgment on false visionaries and diviners.	Establishes precedent: false prophets are stripped of their status, removed from official registers, and cut off from the land.
Deuteronomy 13:1–2	False prophets performing signs/wonders.	Demonstrates that God permits false prophetic signs to test the loyalty of His people's hearts (*lēḇ*).
Deuteronomy 18:20–22	Criteria for true vs. false prophets.	Mandates death for presumptuous prophets whose words are not commanded by God.
1 Kings 22:19–23	Micaiah's vision of Ahab's deception.	Illustrates God allowing/orchestrating a deceiving spirit to prevail over unfaithful prophets as judgment.

VI. Conclusion

God informed the elders of Israel concerning the physical punishment of Judah and the prophets of God who adopt Idolatry. Once more this is the emphasize that these" gods" are speculative in the minds of men and are not real.