

The Book of Ezekiel

Lesson 19-Chapter Eleven (Ezekiel 11:14-25)

Executive Summary

This document synthesizes the theological and historical insights from the second half of Ezekiel Chapter 11, as analyzed by Dr. Luther Ray Smith. The narrative marks a pivotal shift from the announcement of divine judgment to a profound promise of restoration. Following the prophet Ezekiel's intense lamentation regarding the potential total destruction of the house of Israel, the Word of the LORD provides a framework for the future of the nation..

I. The Prophet's Lament and the Crisis of Identity

The narrative begins with Ezekiel in a state of terror. Having witnessed the invasion of Israel, the departure of God's glory from the temple, and the death of key leaders, Ezekiel questions whether the "remnant of Israel" will be destroyed.

The Conflict Between Inhabitants and Exiles

A significant tension exists between the Israelites remaining in Jerusalem and those in exile (Ezekiel 11:14-15):

- **The Inhabitants' Claim:** Those left in Jerusalem dismiss the exiles, telling them to "Go far from the LORD" and claiming the land as their exclusive possession.
- **The Divine Rebuttal:** God identifies the exiles as Ezekiel's "brothers," "relatives," and "the whole house of Israel," effectively validating their status despite their physical distance from the temple.

II. The Key Philological Insights

The source provides a detailed analysis of specific Hebrew terms that illuminate the depth of God's promise to the exiled people.

Hebrew Term	Transliteration	Occurrences in Ezekiel	Contextual Meaning
אָח	<i>āḥ</i>	10	"Brother" or "kin"; refers to a physical relative or kindred connection.
גְּאֻלָּה	<i>'g'ullā</i>	1	Translated as "exiles," but the root (<i>gā'al</i>) means "redeemed" or "kinsman." It underscores Israel's identity as a people redeemed by God, similar to the Exodus.
רָחֵק	<i>rāḥaq</i>	5	"To be far or distant." Used as an imperative plural, reflecting the reality of scattering as punishment for rebellion.
מִוְרָשָׁה	<i>'môrāšā</i>	7	"Possession" or "inheritance." Specifically associated with the land grant promised to the patriarchs.
מִקְדָּשׁ	<i>'miqdāš</i>	30	"Sanctuary" or a "set apart" sacred space.
לֵב	<i>lēḥ</i>	41	"Heart"; refers to the inner man's function of thinking, understanding, and comprehension.

III. The Promise of Restoration

The Word of the LORD addresses the despair of the exiles by outlining a three-stage process of restoration.

1. God as a Mobile Sanctuary: In a significant theological development, God declares that although He has removed the people far away among the nations, He will be "a sanctuary for them a little while" in the countries where they have gone (Ezekiel 11:16). This indicates that the presence of God is not tethered to a specific building in Jerusalem but is accessible to the redeemed even in exile. The lives of Daniel and Esther serve as historical evidence of this reality.

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2. Physical Regathering: God uses three specific active verbs to describe His commitment to the physical nation (Ezekiel 11:17):

- "I will gather you..." (*kawbats ayth*)
- "I will assemble you..." (*awsaf*)
- "I will give you..." (*nawthan*')

This regathering is a sovereign act of God intended to bring the nation back to the land of Israel, regardless of their prior iniquity.

3. Ethical Cleansing: Upon their return, the people are expected to take an active role in purifying the land. The text notes they will "remove all its detestable things and all its abominations" (Ezekiel 11:18), signifying a total rejection of the idols that led to their judgment.

IV. The New Heart and Spirit

The source emphasizes that the restoration described in Ezekiel 11 goes beyond the return from the 70-year Babylonian exile mentioned in Jeremiah. The distinguishing factor is the promise of a fundamental change in human nature.

From Stone to Flesh:

God states He will judge them "to the border of Israel." This indicates that the punishment would not be confined to Jerusalem but would occur outside the traditional boundaries of the land.

- **The Removal:** Taking away the "heart of stone" (stubbornness and lack of comprehension).
- **The Replacement:** Giving a "heart of flesh" and a "new spirit."
- **The Result:** A "unified understanding" that allows the nation to walk in God's statutes and keep His ordinances.

The Covenant Relationship:

This internal transformation leads to the fulfillment of the covenantal formula: "Then they will be My people, and I shall be their God" (Ezekiel 11:20). While Israel was technically already God's people through the Exodus, this statement highlights a future state where the nation responds to God wholeheartedly, no longer "playing the harlot" with false deities.

V. The Divine Judgment and the Departure of Glory

While the vision offers hope for the "redeemed," it also reinforces the certainty of judgment for those who persist in idolatry.

- **Individual Accountability:** Those whose hearts remain committed to "detestable things" will have their conduct brought down on their own heads (Ezekiel 11:21). God will "purge the rebels" before they can enter the land of Israel.
- **The Flight of the Glory:** Ezekiel observes the cherubim lift their wings and the glory of the God of Israel hover over the leaders of the city. The glory then departs from the city and stands over "the mountain which is east of the city" (Ezekiel 11:23).
- **Prophetic Significance of the Mountain:** The source identifies this mountain as the **Mount of Olives**. This is strategically significant as Zechariah 14:4-5 prophesies that the LORD will return to this exact location in power and glory to execute judgment.

VI. Conclusion of the Vision

The vision concludes with the Holy Spirit lifting Ezekiel and returning him to the exiles in Chaldea (Babylon). Ezekiel then communicates the entirety of the vision—both the warnings of judgment and the profound promises of restoration—to the exiled leadership.

Final Summary Note: The restoration of Israel is not contingent upon the nation's faithfulness, in which they failed. Instead, the promises are anchored in the character and faithfulness of God, fulfilling the oaths made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.