

EZEKIEL

Chapter 16

An Allegory of Unfaithful Jerusalem

The word of the LORD came to me: ²“Son of man, confront Jerusalem with her detestable practices ³ and say, ‘This is what the Sovereign LORD says to Jerusalem: Your ancestry and birth were in the land of the Canaanites; your father was an Amorite and your mother a Hittite. ⁴ On the day you were born your cord was not cut, nor were you washed with water to make you clean, nor were you rubbed with salt or wrapped in cloths. ⁵ No one looked on you with pity or had compassion enough to do any of these things for you. Rather, you were thrown out into the open field, for on the day you were born you were despised. ⁶ “Then I passed by and saw you kicking about in your blood, and as you lay there in your blood I said to you, “Live!” ⁷ I made you grow like a plant of the field. You grew up and developed and became the most beautiful of jewels. Your breasts were formed and your hair grew, you who were naked and bare. ⁸”“Later I passed by, and when I looked at you and saw that you were old enough for love, I spread the corner of my garment over you and covered your nakedness. I gave you my solemn oath and entered into a covenant with you, declares the Sovereign LORD, and you became mine. ⁹”“I bathed you with water and washed the blood from you and put ointments on you. ¹⁰ I clothed you with an embroidered dress and put leather sandals on you. I dressed you in fine linen and covered you with costly garments. ¹¹ I adorned you with jewelry: I put bracelets on your arms and a necklace around your neck, ¹² and I put a ring on your nose, earrings on your ears and a beautiful crown on your head. ¹³ So you were adorned with gold and silver; your clothes were of fine linen and costly fabric and embroidered cloth. Your food was fine flour, honey and olive oil. You became very beautiful and rose to be a queen. ¹⁴ And your fame spread among the nations on account of your beauty, because the splendor I had given you made your beauty perfect, declares the Sovereign LORD. ¹⁵”“But you trusted in your beauty and used your fame to become a prostitute. You lavished your favors on anyone who passed by and your beauty became his. ¹⁶ You took some of your garments to make gaudy high places, where you carried on your prostitution. Such things should not happen, nor should they ever occur. ¹⁷ You also took the fine jewelry I gave you, the jewelry made of my gold and silver, and you made for yourself male idols and engaged in prostitution with them. ¹⁸ And you took your embroidered clothes to put on them, and you offered my oil and incense before them. ¹⁹ Also the food I provided for you—the fine flour, olive oil and honey I gave you to eat—you offered as fragrant incense before them. That is what happened, declares the Sovereign LORD. ²⁰”“And you took your sons and daughters whom you bore to me and sacrificed them as food to the idols. Was your prostitution not enough? ²¹ You slaughtered my children and sacrificed them to the idols. ²² In all your detestable practices and your prostitution you did not remember the days of your youth, when you were naked and bare, kicking about in your blood. ²³”“Woe! Woe

to you, declares the Sovereign LORD. In addition to all your other wickedness, ²⁴ you built a mound for yourself and made a lofty shrine in every public square. ²⁵ At the head of every street you built your lofty shrines and degraded your beauty, offering your body with increasing promiscuity to anyone who passed by. ²⁶ You engaged in prostitution with the Egyptians, your lustful neighbors, and provoked me to anger with your increasing promiscuity. ²⁷ So I stretched out my hand against you and reduced your territory; I gave you over to the greed of your enemies, the daughters of the Philistines, who were shocked by your lewd conduct. ²⁸ You engaged in prostitution with the Assyrians too, because you were insatiable; and even after that, you still were not satisfied. ²⁹ Then you increased your promiscuity to include Babylonia, a land of merchants, but even with this you were not satisfied. ³⁰ "How weak-willed you are, declares the Sovereign LORD, when you do all these things, acting like a brazen prostitute! ³¹ When you built your mounds at the head of every street and made your lofty shrines in every public square, you were unlike a prostitute, because you scorned payment. ³² "You adulterous wife! You prefer strangers to your own husband! ³³ Every prostitute receives a fee, but you give gifts to all your lovers, bribing them to come to you from everywhere for your illicit favors. ³⁴ So in your prostitution you are the opposite of others; no one runs after you for your favors. You are the very opposite, for you give payment and none is given to you. ³⁵ "Therefore, you prostitute, hear the word of the LORD! ³⁶ This is what the Sovereign LORD says: Because you poured out your wealth and exposed your nakedness in your promiscuity with your lovers, and because of all your detestable idols, and because you gave them your children's blood, ³⁷ therefore I am going to gather all your lovers, with whom you found pleasure, those you loved as well as those you hated. I will gather them against you from all around and will strip you in front of them, and they will see all your nakedness. ³⁸ I will sentence you to the punishment of women who commit adultery and who shed blood; I will bring upon you the blood vengeance of my wrath and jealous anger. ³⁹ Then I will hand you over to your lovers, and they will tear down your mounds and destroy your lofty shrines. They will strip you of your clothes and take your fine jewelry and leave you naked and bare. ⁴⁰ They will bring a mob against you, who will stone you and hack you to pieces with their swords. ⁴¹ They will burn down your houses and inflict punishment on you in the sight of many women. I will put a stop to your prostitution, and you will no longer pay your lovers. ⁴² Then my wrath against you will subside and my jealous anger will turn away from you; I will be calm and no longer angry. ⁴³ "Because you did not remember the days of your youth but enraged me with all these things, I will surely bring down on your head what you have done, declares the Sovereign LORD. Did you not add lewdness to all your other detestable practices? ⁴⁴ "Everyone who quotes proverbs will quote this proverb about you: "Like mother, like daughter." ⁴⁵ You are a true daughter of your mother, who despised her husband and her children; and you are a true sister of your sisters, who despised their husbands and their children. Your mother was a Hittite and your father an Amorite. ⁴⁶ Your older sister was Samaria, who lived to the north of you with her daughters; and your younger sister, who lived to the south of you with her daughters, was Sodom. ⁴⁷

You not only walked in their ways and copied their detestable practices, but in all your ways you soon became more depraved than they. ⁴⁸ As surely as I live, declares the Sovereign LORD, your sister Sodom and her daughters never did what you and your daughters have done. ⁴⁹ ”“Now this was the sin of your sister Sodom: She and her daughters were arrogant, overfed and unconcerned; they did not help the poor and needy. ⁵⁰ They were haughty and did detestable things before me. Therefore I did away with them as you have seen. ⁵¹ Samaria did not commit half the sins you did. You have done more detestable things than they, and have made your sisters seem righteous by all these things you have done. ⁵² Bear your disgrace, for you have furnished some justification for your sisters. Because your sins were more vile than theirs, they appear more righteous than you. So then, be ashamed and bear your disgrace, for you have made your sisters appear righteous. ⁵³ ”“However, I will restore the fortunes of Sodom and her daughters and of Samaria and her daughters, and your fortunes along with them, ⁵⁴ so that you may bear your disgrace and be ashamed of all you have done in giving them comfort. ⁵⁵ And your sisters, Sodom with her daughters and Samaria with her daughters, will return to what they were before; and you and your daughters will return to what you were before. ⁵⁶ You would not even mention your sister Sodom in the day of your pride, ⁵⁷ before your wickedness was uncovered. Even so, you are now scorned by the daughters of Edom and all her neighbors and the daughters of the Philistines—all those around you who despise you. ⁵⁸ You will bear the consequences of your lewdness and your detestable practices, declares the LORD. ⁵⁹ ”“This is what the Sovereign LORD says: I will deal with you as you deserve, because you have despised my oath by breaking the covenant. ⁶⁰ Yet I will remember the covenant I made with you in the days of your youth, and I will establish an everlasting covenant with you. ⁶¹ Then you will remember your ways and be ashamed when you receive your sisters, both those who are older than you and those who are younger. I will give them to you as daughters, but not on the basis of my covenant with you. ⁶² So I will establish my covenant with you, and you will know that I am the LORD. ⁶³ Then, when I make atonement for you for all you have done, you will remember and be ashamed and never again open your mouth because of your humiliation, declares the Sovereign LORD.”

Ch 16 A satire of Jerusalem’s unfaithfulness. The comparison of idolatry with adultery is common in the Bible, and far older than Ezk. Ch 16 (esp vv 43–58) has many affinities with ch 23. It is the longest single oracle in the OT. The theme is Israel’s gross unfaithfulness in contrast to God’s constant love and fidelity.

Taken on its own terms, this longest single oracle in the whole OT is one of Scripture’s most powerful expressions of both God’s wrath and his love—of Law and Gospel. (CC)

In form, it is an allegory of Jerusalem as an abandoned girl who is rescued by Yahweh, and when grown into a beautiful woman, she is married to him and made a queen, richly clothed and fed. But she repays Yahweh’s gratuitous largesse by pathological infidelity, even paying lovers to sleep with her and surpassing even Sodom and Samaria in

lewdness. Hence, judgment is unavoidable, but, after that, Yahweh will repay her faithlessness with faithfulness to his ancient covenant. Moreover, Yahweh will establish an “everlasting covenant” that includes not only Israelites, but also former pagans: Samaria, Sodom, and their children (16:60–62). Read in light of the NT, this is nothing less than the promise of the new covenant in Jesus Christ and the ingrafting of Gentiles into “the Israel of God” (Gal 6:16), the Christian church. All this shall take place “when I make atonement for you for all you have done” (Ezek 16:63) through Christ’s unblemished life, atoning death, and victorious resurrection. (CC)

16:2 While this first section of the chapter accents Jerusalem’s original calling by grace, this review of covenant history is recited for the purpose of highlighting her current degradation, as Yahweh commands Ezekiel, “make Jerusalem know her abominations.” (CC)

16:3 Cf. Dt 26:5. (CSB)

Ezekiel is not offering a biological genealogy here, but a record of how Israel mixed its religious beliefs with the beliefs of its neighbors. Canaanites were the original inhabitants of the Promised Land and are sometimes used interchangeably with Amorites. There were several major Amorite kingdoms along the Euphrates in the middle of the second millennium BC, and Hittites ruled in eastern Asia Minor a few centuries later. When the kingdoms collapsed, many tribes migrated to Canaan and elsewhere. “Canaanite” seems often to be an umbrella term for all the various groups. They were noted for their depravity, and the Israelites, failing to eliminate them, often adopted their religion and immorality. (TLSB)

Your ancestry and birth. Jerusalem had a centuries-old, pre-Israelite history (Ge 14:18), and the city long resisted Israelite conquest (Jos 15:63). It became fully Israelite only after David’s conquest (2Sa 5:6–9). (CSB)

father ... mother. A reference to Jerusalem’s non-Israelite origin generally, not to any specific individuals. (CSB)

Amorite. Cf. v. 45. Like the Canaanites, the Amorites were pre-Israelite, Semitic inhabitants of Palestine (Ge 48:22; Jos 5:1; 10:5; Jdg 1:34–36). (CSB)

Hittite. The Hittites were non-Semitic residents of Canaan, who earlier had flourished in Asia Minor during the second millennium B.C. (see Ge 23:10–20; 26:34; 1Sa 26:6; 2Sa 11:2–27; 1Ki 11:1). (CSB)

16:4–5 Picture of infant exposure, common among ancient pagan cultures. Rubbing with salt was probably thought to cleanse and toughen the skin, and oil was applied to soften it at the same time. Failure to cut the umbilical cord would soon bring death. (TLSB)

16:4 *rubbed with salt.* This practice has been observed among Palestinian Arab peasants as late as A.D. 1918. (CSB)

wrapped in cloths. Cf. Lk 2:7. (CSB)

That last act not done for infant “Jerusalem” was done for the infant Lord, since the Gospel of Luke records that at Christ’s nativity the Virgin Mary wrapped him in swaddling cloths (Lk 2:7), showing her care for him and serving as part of the divine “sign” to the shepherds (Lk 2:12) (CC)

16:5 *thrown out into the open field.* Abandoned to die. Exposure of infants, common in ancient pagan societies, was abhorrent to Israel. (CSB)

In contrast, Ezek 16:5 spells out the malevolent motivation behind not doing those things for infant “Jerusalem.” Her neglect implies not only the repression of natural parental compassion, but the repudiation of the offspring by abandonment. Parents who abandoned a baby officially rejected all their parental rights and obligations and renounced the child as their own. If the baby happened to be rescued before death, he or she could then legally be adopted, but most likely the child, even if discovered by others, would be left to die. (CC)

16:6 God is pictured as a passerby. (TLSB)

blood. Of childbirth. (CSB)

wallowing in your blood. Situation immediately after birth (placental fluids, etc.). (TLSB)

Live! In the metaphor, physical life is implied, but the wider application is to spiritual life. In either case, life is a gift only God can dispense (TLSB)

Live! † God’s desire for all people, summed up in one word (see 18:23, 32; 1Ti 2:4; 2Pe 3:9). (CSB)

Yet the ancient Near Eastern context gives this statement a greater depth of meaning. To take a baby in his or her amniotic fluid and birth blood implied a legal adoption of the child, who then could not be reclaimed by the natural parents. In the biblical context, “live” implies also spiritual life in this world and bodily resurrection followed by eternal life in the world to come (cf. Jn 10:10; 11:25–26). That God here enables the girl to “live” simply by speaking his Word points toward the rebirth by the power of the Word in, for example, 1 Pet 1:3–5, 23, and to Baptism, wherein the water is accompanied by God’s Word (“the washing of water with the Word,” with bridal imagery in Eph 5:26. On a theological level, this OT imagery corresponds to the NT portrayal of the second birth and adoption as children of God that takes place in the Sacrament of Holy Baptism (e.g., Jn 3:3–8; Gal 3:26–29; Titus 3:4–7). (CC)

16:7 *arrived at full adornment.* Maturation into early adulthood.

hair. Pubic hair (see Isa 7:20). (CSB)

naked and bare. Before God, Israel was spiritually nothing until God gave her His covenant and promises. (TLSB)

With unblushing frankness, Ezekiel depicts the onset of puberty and the girl's growth into womanhood. It is probably as futile as elsewhere to seek a historical analogue in Israel's history for the woman's stark nakedness even after maturing. If it can be pressed, it possibly implies that Israel's status as the chosen people was no birthright nor a product of her "search for truth" nor of any other action by her or quality in her. She was nothing before God and had nothing until he gave her his covenant and promises, as the following verses will emphasize. (Later in the chapter, nudity will be associated with promiscuity and prostitution, but that theme is not yet on the horizon here.) (CC)

16:8 *age for love.* The woman's physical maturity indicates that she is marriageable. (TLSB)

spread the corner of my garment. Symbolic of entering a marriage relationship (see [notes](#) on Dt 22:30; Ru 3:9). (CSB)

OT idiom for marrying her. It may have been only a verbal part of the ceremony or an action in the ceremonies. (TLSB)

covered your nakedness. She must remain covered, i.e., unavailable to any man except her husband. (TLSB)

covenant. Since the maiden symbolizes Jerusalem, this does not refer to the Sinai covenant but to marriage as a covenant (see Mal 2:14). (CSB)

Refers both to the repeated oaths to the patriarchs as well as at Mount Sinai. The words also apply to human marriages, as well as to God's promises to Israel. The Bible usually speaks of "making," "establishing," or "giving" His covenants—not "entering into"—thus emphasizing their unilateral nature, initiated by God out of grace. (TLSB)

became Mine. Refers both to the chosenness of Israel and to the "one flesh" aspect of human marriage (cf Gn 2:24). (TLSB)

16:9–13 In the allegory, the birth and wedding rituals seem to have merged. The jewelry is typically for the wedding ceremony (cf Is 3:18–21). Anointing with fragrant oil is mentioned several times as part of bridal preparations (cf Est 2:12). (TLSB)

16:9 The NT too speaks of the Lord washing his bride: Christ "gave himself up" for his bride, the church, "so that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the Word, so that he himself might present the church to himself as glorious ... holy and blameless" (Eph 5:25–27). The Christian Sacrament of Baptism is the "washing of rebirth/regeneration" (Titus 3:5). In a new act of creation, God makes his redeemed people into a "*holy nation*" (Ex 19:6; cf. 1 Pet 2:9). Thus, we can confess

belief “in one *holy catholic and apostolic church ... one Baptism for the remission of sins*” (Nicene Creed). (CC)

blood. Menstrual blood, indicating sexual maturity (see NIV text note on v. 7). (CSB)

16:10 *embroidered dress ... leather sandals ... fine linen*. Representative of the very best garments. (CSB)

embroidered dress. See 27:16, 24; colored, variegated material fit for a queen (see Ps 45:14). (CSB)

leather sandals. The same kind of leather was used to cover the tabernacle (“hides of sea cows,” Ex 25:5; 26:14). (CSB)

Hide of sea mammals from the Red Sea. (TLSB)

16:11 *bracelets on your arms*. See Ge 24:22. (CSB)

16:12 *ring*. Not piercing the nose but worn on the outer part of the nose (see Ge 24:47). (CSB)

earrings. Circular ear ornaments, worn by men (Nu 31:50). The Hebrew for this word is not the same as that used in Ge 35:4; Ex 32:2–3. (CSB)

crown. The wedding crown (see SS 3:11, where the groom wears it). (CSB)

16:13 *gold and silver*. Cf. Hos 2:8. (CSB)

fine flour. Used in offerings, therefore of high quality (see v. 19; 46:14). (CSB)

fine flour and honey and oil. Highest quality food. *advanced to royalty*. Connects with the beautiful crown of v 12. (TLSB)

olive oil. Cf. Hos 2:8. For the combination of honey and oil see Dt 32:13. (CSB)

You became very beautiful. Cf. Eph 5:27. (CSB)

16:14 *your fame spread*. Especially in the time of David and Solomon. (CSB)

the splendor that I had bestowed on you. Her beauty and other luxurious possessions were not a natural endowment or birthright, but gifts of pure grace. (TLSB)

16:15 The queen descended into depravity. (TLSB)

trusted in. She confused gift and Giver, virtually deifying her beauty. She dedicated her gifts not to the Giver but to herself (self-gratification). Greg: “The deluded mind admires itself for the great things that it has done. And, being exalted in its own sight through hidden tumour, it is deprived of the grace of Him Who bestowed the gift” (NPNF 2 13:36). (TLSB)

prostitute. The accusation of prostitution referred both to spiritual turning away from the Lord and to physical involvement with the fertility rites of Canaanite paganism (cf. Jer 3:1–5; Hos 4:13–14; 9:1). (CSB)

Summary of vv 16–58. Some form of the word “whore” occurs 21 times through v 41. Ezekiel depicts a deliberate affront and rejection of God. (TLSB)

favors. Sexual favors. Verb and noun forms of the Hebrew for this word occur 23 times in this chapter. (CSB)

Opposite of v 8. (TLSB)

anyone who passed by. Cf. Ge 38:14–16. (CSB)

16:16 May reflect common practice of prostitutes in antiquity. (TLSB)

garments. All of the Lord’s previous gifts were used by Jerusalem in prostituting herself. Cloths of some kind were needed in the Asherah cult practices (see 2Ki 23:7). They may have been used as curtains or as bedding (see Am 2:7–8). (CSB)

colorful shrines. Often translated “high places.” Associated with pagan rites, esp “sacred” prostitution. Israel’s maximal ingratitude is described as without parallel in human history. (TLSB)

male idols. Phallic symbols or pictures of naked men (see 23:14). (CSB)

16:17 *My ... My ... I had given you.* Emphasizes the absolute reversal of God’s intent with Israel’s gifts. The verse seems to describe worship of male deities, esp Baal, the main male fertility god in Canaanite religion. (TLSB)

16:18–19 The subject is sacrificial offerings to idols. Some of them parallel the proper worship in the tabernacle/temple. But there are telling differences. Israel had no images to cover. Feeding and clothing idols played a prominent role in pagan rites. (Scripture mocks this practice; cf Ps 50:7–15.) The use of honey in sacrifice is explicitly forbidden (Lv 2:11). The description of sacrifice as a “pleasing aroma” is used of both proper and pagan worship, but the motivations are radically different. (TLSB)

16:20–21 The most offensive pagan worship practice of all—the sacrifice of children. Child sacrifice to the god Molech is often referred to in the Bible and elsewhere in Ezk (20:25–26). The practice is attested archaeologically, esp in certain North African cemeteries used by Phoenician settlers. (TLSB)

16:20 *sons and daughters ... sacrificed.* See 20:26, 31; 23:37; 2Ki 21:6; 23:10; Jer 7:31; 19:5; 32:35. Laws against child sacrifice are recorded in Lev 18:21; 20:2; Dt 12:31; 18:10. (CSB)

16:23 *woe, woe.* Indication of God's increasing exasperation. The necessity of judgment becomes more urgent. (TLSB)

16:24 *mound ... lofty shrine.* Cultic prostitution was moved from the high places (v. 15), which were outside the towns, into Jerusalem. (CSB)

Probably structures readily recognizable as places of prostitution (cf Pr 7, 9). (TLSB)

16:26–29 Three neighbors are listed with whom Israel “played the whore.” They appear in roughly the order in which Israel became acquainted with them. Political alliances inevitably involved recognition and veneration of the deities of the partner nations. As the smaller of the two allies, Israel was vulnerable to mixing its religion with idolatry. (TLSB)

16:26 *lustful.* The Hebrew is more graphic: “having oversized organs.” The language reflects both God's and Ezekiel's disgust with Jerusalem's apostasy. (CSB)

neighbors. Nowhere else in the OT are the Egyptians called “neighbors.” (CSB)

to provoke Me. The more Israel succumbed, the more she enraged God to anger. (TLSB)

16:27 *reduced your territory.* After the 701 B.C. siege of Jerusalem, the Assyrian king Sennacherib gave some of Jerusalem's territory to the Philistines. (CSB)

Historical reference is probably to events after the period of the judges. The period of Egypt's influence over Canaan was past, and only David would gradually succeed in eliminating the Philistine threat. (TLSB)

16:28 By Ezekiel's time, the once-mighty Assyrian Empire had ceased to exist, but in much of the ninth to seventh centuries BC it had flourished. The Northern Kingdom was incorporated into the Assyrian Empire, and Judah was reduced to vassalhood. (TLSB)

not satisfied. Returning to the theme of her insatiable lust, i.e., infidelity to the Lord. (TLSB)

16:29 *trading land of Chaldea.* Babylon was Israel's current “lover.” Because of its location and power, it naturally carried on trade. (TLSB)

16:30 Describes a prostitute who seeks and seduces customers. Cf Pr 7. (TLSB)

16:31 *you scorned payment.* Emphasizes the woman's almost pathological behavior. There may be a reference to trade relations that impoverished Israel, but Ezekiel's interest is primarily in religion and morals. (TLSB)

16:32–34 The accent here is not only whoredom, but the adultery of a philandering wife who even pays illegitimate lovers. The abandoned husband is the Lord. (TLSB)

bribing. Describes the odd flow of money from prostitute to client; dramatizes exceptional lust. (TLSB)

16:32 *Adulterous wife*. Addressed directly to Israel. (TLSB)

16:33 *you give gifts to all your lovers*. Jerusalem's perversity is here pictured as worse than adultery and ordinary prostitution (see also v. 34). (CSB)

16:35–37 God's judgment is described as a reversal of the whore's own actions. As she gathered lovers, God will gather them against her. As she had bared herself for her lovers, she will be stripped bare at her trial. There is copious evidence outside the Bible that this was a common punishment for unfaithfulness, leading to a divorce. Here it is a reversal of the Lord's spreading the edge of His robe over her (v 8). (TLSB)

16:37 *strip you*. A reversal of the marriage covering (v. 8) and a return to the state described in v. 7. (CSB)

16:38 *sentence you*. The punishment was death (see Lev 20:10; Dt 22:22) by stoning (see v. 40; Dt 22:21–24; Jn 8:5–7) or burning (Ge 38:24). (CSB)

Her blood would be shed because of her adultery and her sacrifice of the children she had borne to the Lord (v 20). This comes full circle to the condition in which God first found her wallowing in her blood (v 6). (TLSB)

16:39–41 *strip ... take ... leave ... stone ... cut ... burn*. String of verbs relates the intense action of punishment for Jerusalem. The Lord will deputize her former paramours to carry out the actions. (TLSB)

16:39 *your mounds ... your lofty shrines*. The cultic centers within the city (see v. 24). (CSB)

16:40 *mob ... will stone you*. Cf. 23:47. (CSB)

16:41 *burn down your houses*. A common form of punishment (see Jdg 12:1; 15:6). (CSB)

She will be publicly removed from the scene. (TLSB)

women. Rivals in her profession (politically, allies in revolt against Babylon). (TLSB)

no longer pay your lovers. See v. 33. (CSB)

16:42 *I satisfy My wrath ... jealousy ... I will be calm.* Language is that of God's satisfaction of the penalty for all her sin (the same language the Church uses to describe Christ's crucifixion in full satisfaction for mankind's sin, effecting God's calm).

16:43 *returned your deeds upon your head.* The punishment has fit the crime. (TLSB)

lewdness in addition to all your abominations? The punishment was almost inexpressibly severe, as her deviancy had almost been beyond words. (TLSB)

16:44–45 *proverb.* Israel's wild behavior had been so flagrant that it could be summarized into a wise saying. (TLSB)

16:44 *Like mother, like daughter.* Referring to Jerusalem's continual and seemingly hereditary tendency toward evil (cf. vv. 3, 45). (CSB)

As in v 3, the mother, called a Hittite, represents the pagan Canaanites, and her daughter is Jerusalem, or ultimately all Israel. (TLSB)

16:46 *daughters.* Suburbs or satellite cities. (CSB)

elder sister is Samaria ... younger sister ... Sodom. A more literal translation would be "larger" and "smaller" (geographically). The Northern Kingdom, with its 10 tribes, encompassed vastly more territory than Judah. While there are no explicit statements about Sodom's size, surrounded by desert, it was not very large. (TLSB)

16:47 *more depraved than they.* The Bible frequently compares a city or people to Sodom (see v. 46) as the epitome of evil and degradation (see Dt 29:23; 32:32; Isa 1:9–10; 3:9; Jer 23:14; La 4:6; Mt 10:15; 11:23–24; Jude 7). (CSB)

As God's covenanted people, Israel was held to a higher standard than her sisters. (TLSB)

16:49–50 Sodom's pride, gluttony, and neglect of the poor describes a decadent society in which gross immorality might easily thrive. (TLSB)

an abomination. Probably refers to sodomy (Gn 19:1–22). At times, "abomination" is applied specifically to homosexual behavior (Lv 18:22; 20:13). (TLSB)

16:49 *sin of your sister Sodom.* Here social injustice rather than sexual perversion (Ge 19) is highlighted. (CSB)

16:51 *Samaria has not committed half your sins.* Typically, Ezekiel expresses himself in hyperbole. The corruption may be described as more intense because Judah has the center of holiness in its midst: the temple. Precisely because Jerusalem was the elect city, anyone aware of that fact would hold her to a higher standard. (TLSB)

16:52 *Bear your disgrace.* Imperative in form, but when God is the speaker, it often has the force of a prediction. The reference may be to Jerusalem's imminent destruction. (TLSB)

intervened. Jerusalem's greater judgment in the heavenly court had served as an argument in her sisters' defense. (TLSB)

16:53 *restore their fortunes.* In the new creation, even sinners like Sodom can be redeemed. Here, Jerusalem's restoration is mentioned last, almost as an afterthought. As lesser offenders, it is only right that the sisters should be restored first. Israel is in special need of sheer grace because, as heir of the promise, she has transgressed more. (TLSB)

16:54 *becoming a consolation.* Because God will forgive her flagrant behavior, Jerusalem will be an example of comfort to Samaria and Sodom. Unbelievers today also console themselves by the misdeeds of Christians and may use them as an excuse to reject the Gospel. (TLSB)

16:56 *byword.* Jerusalem thought of herself highly and could look down on Sodom to excuse herself as not being so wicked. (TLSB)

day of your pride. Referring to a time long before Ezekiel, when Jerusalem (as an Israelite city) was still relatively uncorrupted—as in the days of David and the early years of Solomon. (CSB)

16:57 *object of reproach.* Because of her depravity and its punishment, others will use her name as she had once used “Sodom” (cf 5:14–15; Jer 23:14; 49:18; 50:40). (TLSB)

scorned by the daughters of Edom. The OT frequently condemns Edom for this (see 25:12–14; 35; Isa 63:1; Obadiah). (CSB)

Syria ... Philistines. Almost any of Israel's neighbors could have been mentioned to illustrate the point. (TLSB)

16:1–58 In a long allegorical satire, Ezekiel equates idolatry with adultery. The underlying theme is one of base ingratitude. Forgetting God's unmerited grace, Jerusalem chases after the favors of idolatrous nations. God has no alternative but to punish her severely. If the Lord can restore someone who has fallen as far as Jerusalem, He can restore anyone. His grace is broad enough to cover even your greatest sin. • Lord, keep us ever mindful of all the undeserved mercies You have showered upon us from birth, especially the forgiveness of sin and eternal life, lest, like Jerusalem, we fall into great shame and vice. Amen. (TLSB)

16:59 *I will deal with you as you have done.* Before repentance, the principle of reciprocity will apply: as Israel had “punished” the Lord, He will punish them. (TLSB)

covenant. See v. 8 and **note**. (CSB)

The covenant in which God has promised them so much (cf 44:7). (TLSB)

16:60 The great reversal from condemnation to mercy begins here. Abrupt transitions like this are found elsewhere in prophetic books. (TLSB)

I will remember My covenant. Remembering is not just a matter of the intellect, but it is also an action word. Israel may have forgotten completely, but God had not. (TLSB)

I will establish for you an everlasting covenant. Through Ezekiel, God reaffirms His promises. (TLSB)

16:61 *I give them to you as daughters.* Samaria and Sodom had originally been described as sisters of Israel (cf vv 48–49) but in the new creation they will be received as daughters. God’s boundless grace is not limited to the chosen people but is extended to all. (TLSB)

16:63 *confounded.* No words are adequate to express God’s goodness. (TLSB)

16:59–63 The vivid chapter on Israel’s whoredom is followed by a beautiful affirmation of God’s unwavering faithfulness to His everlasting covenant. The Gospel stands in stunning contrast to the Law’s condemnation. With repentant joy, entrust your life and hope to the Lord. • Thanks be to You, O Lord, for choosing and saving even the chief of sinners, as all of us must account ourselves before You. Amen. (TLSB)