

# Ezekiel 16:1-14 Commentary

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CHRONOLOGY OF EZEKIEL'S PROPHECIES				
PROPHECY OF JUDGMENT The LORD is not there			PROPHECY OF RESTORATION The LORD is There	
FATE OF JUDAH Before the Siege		FOES OF JUDAH During the Siege	FUTURE OF JUDAH After the Siege	
593-588 BC		587-586	586-571	
7 YEARS OF PROPHESYING HORROR & NO HOPE			15 YEARS OF PROPHESYING HOPE	
Ezekiel 1:1-3:27 Ezekiel Sees the Glory & Receives the Call	Ezekiel 4:1-24:27 Judgments Against Judah	Ezekiel 25:1-32:32 Judgments Against the Gloating Nations	Ezekiel 33:1-39:29 Restoration of Israel to the LORD	Ezekiel 40:1-48:35 Visions of the Temple Jehovah Shammah

**Outline of the Book of Ezekiel from Dr John MacArthur** - The book can be largely divided into sections about condemnation/retribution and then consolation/restoration. A more detailed look divides the book into 4 sections. First, are prophecies on the ruin of Jerusalem (Ezekiel 1:1–24:27). Second, are prophecies of retribution on nearby nations (Ezekiel 25:1–32:32), with a glimpse at God’s future restoration of Israel (Ezekiel 28:25,26). Thirdly, there is a transition chapter (Ezekiel 33:1-33) which gives instruction concerning a last call for Israel to repent. Finally, the fourth division includes rich expectations involving God’s future restoration of Israel (Ezekiel 34:1–48:35). ([Reference](#))

- I. Prophecies of Jerusalem’s Ruin (Ezekiel 1:1–24:27)

A. Preparation and Commission of Ezekiel (Ezekiel 1:1–3:27)

1. Divine appearance to Ezekiel (Ezekiel 1:1–28)|

2. Divine assignment to Ezekiel (Ezekiel 2:1–3:27)

B. Proclamation of Jerusalem’s Condemnation (Ezekiel 4:1–24:27)

1. Signs of coming judgment (Ezekiel 4:1–5:4)

2. Messages concerning judgment (Ezekiel 5:5–7:27)

3. Visions concerning abomination in the city and temple (Ezekiel 8:1–11:25)

4. Explanations of judgment (Ezekiel 12:1–24:27)
- II. Prophecies of Retribution to the Nations (Ezekiel 25:1–32:32)

A. Ammon (Ezekiel 25:1–7)

B. Moab (Ezekiel 25:8–11)

C. Edom (Ezekiel 25:12–14)

D. Philistia (Ezekiel 25:15–17)

E. Tyre (Ezekiel 26:1–28:19)

F. Sidon (Ezekiel 28:20–24)  
Excursus: The Restoration of Israel (Ezekiel 28:25, 26)  
G. Egypt (Ezekiel 29:1–32:32)

### III. Provision for Israel's Repentance (Ezekiel 33:1–33)

### IV. Prophecies of Israel's Restoration (Ezekiel 34:1–48:35)

#### A. Regathering of Israel to the Land (Ezekiel 34:1–37:28)

1. Promise of a True Shepherd (Ezekiel 34:1–31)
2. Punishment of the nations (Ezekiel 35:1–36:7)
3. Purposes of restoration (Ezekiel 36:8–38)
4. Pictures of restoration—dry bones and two sticks (Ezekiel 37:1–28)

#### B. Removal of Israel's Enemies from the Land (Ezekiel 38:1–39:29)

1. Invasion of Gog to plunder Israel (Ezekiel 38:1–16)
2. Intervention of God to protect Israel (Ezekiel 38:17–39:29)

#### C. Reinstatement of True Worship in Israel (Ezekiel 40:1–46:24)

1. New temple (Ezekiel 40:1–43:12)
2. New worship (Ezekiel 43:13–46:24)

#### D. Redistribution of the Land in Israel (Ezekiel 47:1–48:35)

1. Position of the river (Ezekiel 47:1–12)
2. Portions for the tribes (Ezekiel 47:13–48:35)

Ezekiel 16:1 Then the **word** of the **LORD came** to me, **saying**, (**NASB: Lockman**)

#### AN OUTLINE OF EZEKIEL 16

An Allegory of Unfaithful Jerusalem (NIV)

God's Unfaithful Bride (NET)

God's Grace to Unfaithful Jerusalem (NASB)

Jerusalem the Unfaithful (Good News Bible)

- **Ezekiel 16:1-14** The Lord's Loving kindnesses to Jerusalem
- **Ezekiel 16:15-34** Unfaithful Jerusalem's Harlotry
- **Ezekiel 16:35-50** God's Judgment on Jerusalem
- **Ezekiel 16:51-63**
  - Sodom & Samaria Will be Restored (53-58) (GNB)
  - Jerusalem Will Be Ashamed (53-58) (CEV)
  - Covenant that Lasts Forever (59-63) (GNB)

**Warren Wiersbe** - This long chapter contains some of the most vivid language found anywhere in Scripture. It is addressed to the city of Jerusalem but refers to the entire nation. The chapter traces the spiritual history of the Jews from "birth" (God's call of Abraham) through "marriage" (God's covenant with the people), and up to their "spiritual prostitution" (idolatry) and the sad consequences that followed (ruin and exile). The Lord takes His "wife" to court and bears witness of her unfaithfulness to Him. At the same time, the Lord is replying to the complaints of the people that He had not kept His promises when He allowed the Babylonians to invade the land. God did keep His covenant; it was Israel who broke her marriage vow and also broke the heart of her Lord and invited His chastening (Ezek. 6:9). But as we read the chapter, we must see not only the dark background of Israel's wickedness but also the bright light of God's love and grace. "But where sin abounded, grace abounded much more" (Rom. 5:20, NKJV).

**Then** - Time phrase often marking succession in a chain of events.

**MacArthur** - This longest chapter in Ezekiel is similar to Ezekiel 23:1-49 in that both indict Judah as spiritually immoral (Ezek 16:2). The story of Israel's sin and unfaithfulness to the love of God is told in all its sordid, vile character. The chapter is so sad and indicting that some of the ancient rabbis did not allow it to be read in public. (The MacArthur Study Bible)

Whereas the preceding parable of the vine wood emphasized **unfruitfulness**, in this chapter the allegory of a wife emphasizes **unfaithfulness**. Believers today as the bride of Christ are to be both fruitful and faithful for as Paul instructed the Romans

my brethren, you also were made to die to the Law through the body of Christ, that you **might be joined to** (KJV/NKJV = **married to**) another, to Him who was raised from the dead, (in order) that **we might bear fruit for God**. (which fulfills our purpose for true spiritual fruit brings glory to God) (Ro 7:4note)

**Paul** goes on to explain that before we were born again,

while we were in the flesh, the sinful passions, which were aroused by the Law, were at work in the members of our body to bear fruit for death. But now we have been released from the Law, having died to that by which we were bound, so that we serve in newness of the Spirit (the only way to bear the fruit of the Spirit!) and not in oldness of the letter. (Ro 7:5-6-notes)

**Wesley's** plea was "Lord, let me not live to be useless." And all God's children cry "Amen, Lord!"

This is the longest chapter in Ezekiel and closely parallels the indictment of Judah in Ezekiel 23:1-49 (2 sisters). In this chapter God describes Israel's sin and unfaithfulness to His love in such frank and indicting terms that some of the ancient rabbis refused to allow public reading of these passages verses! Expositor's adds "Some people are offended by the stark realism of this chapter. However, God is always straightforward about life. The realism of Israel's history demands an accurate and vivid analogy."

**Wiersbe** - Unfaithfulness (16). Israel was the wife of Jehovah only because of His grace and love. She was in wretched shape when He called her and saved her. He showered her with gifts, which she used to commit spiritual adultery as she worshiped the idols of the other nations. She was both an adulterous wife who broke the marriage covenant and a harlot who paid others to sin with her. God judged Sodom and Israel (Samaria, the northern kingdom), but that did not deter Judah; she went right on sinning. No wonder God became angry and judged the people. In Romans 7:4, Paul applies these two images to believers: we are "married to another—to Him who was raised from the dead, that we should bear fruit to God." Jesus Christ wants our single-hearted devotion as we share our love with Him (2 Cor. 11:2–3). (Borrow copy of [With the Word](#))

**Ezekiel 16:2** [Son of man, make known to Jerusalem her abominations](#) ([NASB: Lockman](#))

**Amplified:** Son of man, cause Jerusalem to know, understand, and realize her [idolatrous] abominations [that they] are disgusting, detestable, and shamefully vile. ([Amplified Bible - Lockman](#))

**Son of man** - "This is literally "ben-Adam" (BDB 119 CONSTRUCT, BDB 9). This is used often in Ezekiel as a way of referring to Ezekiel as a human being (93 times, cf. Ps. 8:4). In Ezekiel it is the way God addresses Ezekiel. This same phrase is found in Job and Psalms. In Dan. 7:13 this term takes on divine characteristics as one likened to "a son of man" coming before the Ancient of Days (i.e., deity) riding on the clouds of heaven. Daniel 7:13 is the background for Jesus' use of this term for himself, which combines humanity and deity (i.e., 1 John 4:1–3). The phrase had no nationalistic or militaristic rabbinical overtones." (Utley)

**Son of man** -

Num. 23:19; Job 25:6; Job 35:8; Ps. 8:4; Ps. 80:17; Ps. 144:3; Isa. 51:12; Isa. 56:2; Jer. 49:18; Jer. 49:33; Jer. 50:40; Jer. 51:43; Ezek. 2:1; Ezek. 2:3; Ezek. 2:6; Ezek. 2:8; Ezek. 3:1; Ezek. 3:3; Ezek. 3:4; Ezek. 3:10; Ezek. 3:17; Ezek. 3:25; Ezek. 4:1; Ezek. 4:16; Ezek. 5:1; Ezek. 6:2; Ezek. 7:2; Ezek. 8:5; Ezek. 8:6; Ezek. 8:8; Ezek. 8:12; Ezek. 8:15; Ezek. 8:17; Ezek. 11:2; Ezek. 11:4; Ezek. 11:15; Ezek. 12:2; Ezek. 12:3; Ezek. 12:9; Ezek. 12:18; Ezek. 12:22; Ezek. 12:27; Ezek. 13:2; Ezek. 13:17; Ezek. 14:3; Ezek. 14:13; Ezek. 15:2; Ezek. 16:2; Ezek. 17:2; Ezek. 20:3; Ezek. 20:4; Ezek. 20:27; Ezek. 20:46; Ezek. 21:2; Ezek. 21:6; Ezek. 21:9; Ezek. 21:12; Ezek. 21:14; Ezek. 21:19; Ezek. 21:28; Ezek. 22:2; Ezek. 22:18; Ezek. 22:24; Ezek. 23:2; Ezek. 23:36; Ezek. 24:2; Ezek. 24:16; Ezek. 24:25; Ezek. 25:2; Ezek. 26:2; Ezek. 27:2; Ezek. 28:2; Ezek. 28:12; Ezek. 28:21; Ezek. 29:2; Ezek. 29:18; Ezek. 30:2; Ezek. 30:21; Ezek. 31:2; Ezek. 32:2; Ezek. 32:18; Ezek. 33:2; Ezek. 33:7; Ezek. 33:10; Ezek. 33:12; Ezek. 33:24; Ezek. 33:30; Ezek. 34:2; Ezek. 35:2; Ezek. 36:1; Ezek. 36:17; Ezek. 37:3; Ezek. 37:9; Ezek. 37:11; Ezek. 37:16; Ezek. 38:2; Ezek. 38:14; Ezek. 39:1; Ezek. 39:17; Ezek. 40:4; Ezek. 43:7; Ezek. 43:10; Ezek. 43:18; Ezek. 44:5; Ezek. 47:6; Dan. 7:13; Dan. 8:17;

"What follows is an animated development of the dreary story, designed to teach errant Jerusalem the real nature of her character in the eyes of God. The word *abominations* describes that which makes one physically ill." (Nelson's NKJV Study Bible.)

**Make known** (Hiphil imperative) **to Jerusalem her abominations** (Ezekiel 20:4; 22:2; 23:36; 33:7-9; Ho 8:1) - The Hebrew yada

means to know and in this context means to make known, the NET version rendering it "confront Jerusalem." The Septuagint translates the Hebrew with [diamarturomai](#) which means (1) is a command in the aorist imperative (Do this now! Don't delay! It is urgent!) and (2) means to give a solemn witness/warning to the hearers (Paul uses this verb to command Timothy to preach the Word! - see 2 Ti 4:1, 2). Ezekiel is to make solemn declaration about the truth of Jerusalem's sinful condition.

The English translation of the Septuagint (LXX)(Greek translation of the Hebrew) has "**testify** to Jerusalem" where the Greek word for **testify** is [diamarturomai](#) which means to solemnly witness or bear witness This is an interesting opening because Ezekiel is in exile in Babylon and not in **Jerusalem**. One explanation is that although **Jerusalem** does refer to the city, in context the term is being used also in a "broader" sense as representative of the Jewish people.

The KJV translates it more "forcefully" as **cause Jerusalem to know**. The Amplified Version translates it with this thought (verse 2) as "Jerusalem [representing Israel]".

**Guzik** - Throughout this chapter, Jerusalem is used as an accurate representative of the people Israel as a whole.

**Feinberg** - "Ezekiel was charged by God to declare his message to Jerusalem as representative of all Judah, and even the entire nation."

Ezekiel was to give an uncompromising message, and like Isaiah was to

Cry loudly, do not hold back. Raise your voice like a trumpet, and declare to (God's) people their transgression and to the house of Jacob their sins. (Isa 58:1)

As God told Hosea, Ezekiel was to

Put the trumpet to your lips! Like an eagle the enemy comes against the house of the LORD (in the context of Hosea that enemy was Assyria, and for Ezekiel of course was Babylon), because they have transgressed (broken, rejected) My covenant, and rebelled against My law.

Quoting Isaiah 57:12NLT

Now I will expose your so-called good deeds that you consider so righteous. None of them will benefit or save you.

This allegory of Jerusalem serves to expose her **so-called good deeds** and should also serve as a dramatic warning to anyone who says they are saved and yet continues to live in their "abominations", for

by this the children of God and the children of the devil are obvious: anyone who does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor the one who does not love his brother. (1Jn 3:10-note)

**Abominations** (tow'ebah - word study) ("loathsome practices" NJB, "loathsome sins" NLT; "detestable practices" NIV) refers to that which causes one to disgust, abhor, loathe or detest and in context the one who abhors Jerusalem's ("Israel's") conduct is God. One of the most striking, sad and powerful examples of their **abominations** is found in Ezekiel 8 where God had instructed His prophet to

"Go in and see the wicked **abominations** that they are committing (in the Holy Temple)....every form of creeping things and beasts and detestable things, with all the idols of the house of Israel, were carved on the wall (of the Temple area) all around. And standing in front of them were seventy elders of the house of Israel...each man with his censer in his hand, and the fragrance of the cloud of incense rising...the elders of the house of Israel...in the dark, each man in the room of his carved images" totally deceived saying "The LORD does not see us; the LORD has forsaken the land." God went on to tell Ezekiel that he would "see still greater **abominations** which they are committing...(at) the entrance of the gate of the LORD'S house which was toward the north... women...sitting there weeping for Tammuz." But God was not finished with this horrid picture, declaring to Ezekiel that he would "see still greater **abominations** than these... and behold, at the entrance to the temple of the LORD, between the porch and the altar, were about 25 men with their backs to the temple of the LORD and their faces toward the east; and they were prostrating themselves eastward toward the sun." (backs to the Creator, bowing to the creation as "sun worshippers"!)" (Ezekiel 8:9-17)

This Hebrew word (tow'ebah) is used to describe a variety of specific "abominations" including

- idolatry (Dt 7:25)
- human sacrifice (Dt 12:31),
- engaging in occult activities (Dt 18:9-14),

- conducting one's business dishonestly (Dt 25:13-16),
- practicing ritual prostitution (1Ki 14:23ff),
- and similar acts of disobedience (Pr 6:16-19 lists seven abominations).

**Jerusalem** was guilty of practicing all of these **abominations**, any one of which would have been enough to justify God's wrath on them. It is also notable that on occasion this Hebrew word translated **abominations** (tow'ebah) is also used as a synonym for **'idol'** (eg, Isa 44:19) or even for specific pagan false gods, for example, referring to the idol [Milcom](#) (see also [Molech](#)) as "the **abomination** of the [Ammonites](#)" (in 2Ki 23:13)

At the other end of the spectrum,

he who turns away his ear from listening to the law, even his prayer is an abomination" (Pr 28:9).

And so in **Isaiah** God says to Israel

So when you spread out your hands in prayer, I will hide My eyes from you. Yes, even though you multiply prayers, I will not listen. Your hands are covered with blood." (Isa 1:15-note)

Ezekiel 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](#). (NASB: Lockman)

**Amplified:** And say, Thus says the Lord God to Jerusalem [representing Israel]: Your [spiritual] origin and your birth are thoroughly Canaanitish; your [spiritual] father was an Amorite and your [spiritual] mother a Hittite. ([Amplified Bible - Lockman](#))

**Brenton:** and thou shalt say, Thus saith the Lord to Jerusalem; Thy root and thy birth are of the land of Chanaan: thy father was an Amorite, and thy mother a Chettite. (English translation of the Septuagint LXX)

## ISRAEL DEPICTED AS AN UNWANTED CHILD

**Thus says** - May we never lose the awe and wonder that we are being allowed to actually hear God speaking!

**Lord God** - NIV more accurately translates it **sovereign LORD**

**God** had appointed (Ezekiel) a watchman for the house of Israel" and so when he heard a message from (God's) mouth" he would "give them warning" (Ezek 33:7)

The **IVP Bible background commentary** has a well reasoned comment stating that

This passage operates on two levels. First, it is correct to tie Jerusalem, at least the [Jebusite](#) city, to [Amorite](#) and North Syrian [Hittite](#) ([map](#)) political origins. This is established by its mention in the [El Amarna texts](#). However, on a symbolic level, in confronting Jerusalem with its mixed ancestry (tying it to three of the seven major inhabitant groups of [Canaan](#) listed in Ex 3:8), God identifies the place and the people as utterly corrupt. When the land was conquered, it was the responsibility of the Israelites to purify it of its idolatrous traditions (Dt 7:1–5), but instead the people became just like the nations they were supposed to displace (**Ed: This begs a question - Is much of the church in America living like the pagans around them, watching the same R-rated or even MA-rated movies/series that use Jesus precious Name as a curse word, etc? Are you convicted? I pray so -- I am and have been forced to turn off a number of shows and movies that were otherwise entertaining! Try Vidangel which blocks the godless language and sex.**). (Matthews, V. H., et al, The IVP Bible Background Commentary: Old Testament. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press)

**Your origin and your birth are from the land of the [Canaanite](#)** (Ezekiel 16:45; 21:30; Ge 11:25,29; Joshua 24:14; Neh 9:7; Isa 1:10; 51:1,2; Mt 3:7; 11:24; Lu 3:7; Jn 8:44; Eph 2:3; 1Jn 3:10)

**Origin** - ancestry, parentage, lineage, family line with a focus on the origin

**Birth** - family, relatives, kindred

**MacArthur** - Ezek 16:3–5 Israel was like an abandoned child. In Ezek 16:4–14 we see the history of Israel from her conception to her glory under Solomon.

**Taylor** - "The statement is heavy with sarcasm, however, for the term 'Canaanite' was a byword for moral decadence."

**The land of the [Canaanite](#)** - The physical location of Jerusalem is in the "land of Canaan", but as noted above, God is also alluding to the moral condition of Jerusalem.

1 John 3:10 By this the children of God and the children of the devil are obvious: anyone who does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor the one who does not love his brother.

John 8:44 "You are of your father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own nature; for he is a liar, and the father of lies.

Eph 2:3 Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest.

**Your father was an Amorite and your mother a Hittite** - The [Amorites](#) elsewhere in Scripture were used by God to represent the epitome of evil, in Genesis God declaring that "in the fourth generation (Abraham's offspring) shall return here (to Canaan), for **the iniquity of the Amorite is not yet complete**. (Ge 15:16)

**Matthew Poole** - "Sometimes the ill nature of a father is corrected in the child by the sweetness of the mother, but you Jews were not so happy, your mother was as bad every whit as your father."

**Was Jerusalem's "father" literally an [Amorite](#) and her "mother" literally a [Hittite](#)?** In Isaiah God declares to his people (once in this same chapter identifying them as synonymous with Jerusalem, see Isa 51:17)

Listen to me, you who pursue righteousness, who seek the LORD: Look to the rock from which you were hewn, and to the quarry from which you were dug. **Look to Abraham your father, and to Sarah who gave birth to you in pain**, when he was one I called him, then I blessed him and multiplied him. (Isa 51:1-2)

This verse begs the question -- **What then is God saying with this description of Jerusalem?**

I agree with **Morris'** comment, where he notes that "

Both Amorites and Hittites were prominent in Canaan when Abraham arrived there from Ur of the Chaldees. Neither Abraham, Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel nor Leah had any Amorite or Hittite blood in their personal heritage, but these pagan influences had infiltrated Jerusalem long before David captured it, and such influences had infected the children of Israel as soon as they returned there from Egypt under Joshua. ([note](#))

And I would add that these pagan influences came into "full bloom" after Joshua died (see the detailed discussion below).

**Mother a [Hittite](#)** - see related verse Ezekiel 16:44-note.

**Feinberg** - Amorite and Hittite were general names for the people of Canaan who occupied the land before Abraham.... Being the most powerful of the nations in Canaan, they represented them all."

**Ryrie** agrees with this interpretation commenting that this verse refers to "Jerusalem's **moral genealogy** included the Amorite (Canaanite) and Hittite (a non-Semitic pagan people)." ([Ryrie Study Bible](#))

**Wiersbe** - Many Jews were excessively proud of their heritage and called the Gentiles "dogs," but the Lord reminded them that they had descended from the Amorites and the Hittites (see Gen. 10:15–16; Deut. 20:17), and that their great city of Jerusalem was once inhabited by the Jebusites (Josh. 15:63). It wasn't until the time of David that Jerusalem belonged to the Jews and became the capital of the nation (Josh. 10:5; 2 Sam. 5:6–10). For that matter, their esteemed ancestor Abraham was an idol-worshiping pagan when God graciously called him! (Josh. 24:2–3) So much for national pride. (Be Reverent)

**John MacArthur** agrees noting that

These names ([Canaanite...Amorite...Hittite](#)) identify the residents of Canaan who occupied the land when Abraham migrated there (cf. Ge 12:5,6). Jerusalem had the same moral character as the rest of Canaan." ([The MacArthur Study Bible](#))

In preparation for entering the promised land, Moses had given Israel crystal clear instructions that

When the LORD your God shall bring you into the land where you are entering to possess it, and shall **clear away many nations before you, the Hittites** and the Girgashites and the **Amorites** and the **Canaanites** and



the **Perizzites** and the **Hivites** and the **Jebusites**, seven nations greater and stronger than you (**Ed: Notice God is asking them to do something humanly impossible! No nation can defeat a nation greater and stronger, much less seven of them! This is a clear call for yielding to Jehovah and relying and trusting in His power and provision to destroy these mighty enemies. It was true then and it is true today! What "Canaanite sins" are you struggling to overcome in your power? Give it up and trust in the Lord and He will give you the power by His indwelling Holy Spirit to do supernaturally what is impossible naturally!**), and when the LORD your God shall **deliver** (give) them before you, and you shall **defeat** (strike severely, slay, smite) them, then you shall **utterly destroy** them (**Ed: This is a key phrase! UTTERLY DESTROY - Is there some sin that like a surreptitious viper keeps crawling back into your life and biting you, injecting its deadly poison [so to speak of course!]? Perhaps it is because you have failed to cut off the head of the serpent, to UTTERLY DESTROY that sin which so easily entangles you [Heb 12:1-note], instead far too often choosing to make provision for the flesh in regard to its lusts, something which Paul commanded us NOT to do in Romans 13:14-note. When you "bury the hatchet" in the backyard, don't leave the handle sticking out of the ground!**). You shall make no covenant with them and show no favor (no mercy) to them. Furthermore, you shall not intermarry with them; you shall not give your daughters to their sons, nor shall you take their daughters for your sons. For **they will turn your sons away from following Me to serve other gods**; (**Ed: Sadly we see that this even happened to the "wisest" man in the Old Testament - read and be warned by the story of 1 Kings 11:1-12. Notice that the heart of Solomon's problem was His heart! See studies on this vital topic - Heart**) then the anger of the LORD will be kindled against you, and He will quickly destroy you. But thus you shall do to them: you shall **tear down** their altars, and **smash** their sacred pillars, and hew down their Asherim (the abominable "goddess" [Ashtoreth](#) [or [here](#)] - [see picture of a statue](#) that was not smashed and burned!), and burn their graven images with fire. (**Why? Here is the key -- it was to be the undergirding motivation for Israel and it is to be the undergirding motivation for us dear brother or sister in Christ!**) For you are a holy (separated, set apart. See study of the related Hebrew noun **qodesh**) people to the LORD your God; the LORD your God has **chosen** you to be a people for **His own possession** (treasured possession) out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth (**Ed: Beloved believer, you are chosen as God's treasured possession [Titus 2:14-note]! Are your practices congruent with your pedigree and privileges in Christ?**). For you are a holy people to the LORD your God (cp 1 Peter 1:13-16-note, 1 Peter 2:9-note); the LORD your God has chosen you to be a people for His own possession out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth (**See NT Parallel - eklektos; Chosen in Christ**). The LORD did not set His love on you nor choose you because you were more in number than any of the peoples, for you were the fewest of all peoples, **but because the LORD loved you** and kept the oath which He swore to your forefathers (**Ed: Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob - see Abrahamic Covenant**), the LORD brought you out by a mighty hand, and **redeemed** (**see word study of padah**) you from the house of slavery, from the hand of [Pharaoh king of Egypt](#)." (Dt 7:1-8)

**Moses** specifically declared that

The graven images of their gods you are to burn with fire; you shall not covet the silver or the gold that is on them, nor take it for yourselves, **lest you be snared by it**, (**Ed: Because of this ever present danger to us beloved, we should frequently pursue the practice of David in Psalm 25:15 and pray Mt 6:13-note**) for it is an abomination (Hebrew = tow'ebah; Lxx translates with picturesque word *bdelugma*) to the LORD your God. And you shall not bring an abomination into your house, and like it come under the ban; you shall utterly detest it and you shall utterly abhor it, for it is something banned." (Dt 7:25-26)

Israel conquered Canaan under the leadership of Joshua and generally obeyed the Lord's command but after Joshua died Judges records that the tribes of Israel did not "drive out the Canaanites" (Judges 1:29-see note) and that "the Canaanites lived among (in the midst of) them" (Judges 1:30-see note)

**Judges** records that "the people served the LORD all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders who survived Joshua, who had seen all the great work of the LORD which He had done for Israel." (Judges 2:7-see note)

After Joshua and all of his generation had died

there arose another generation after them who did not know the LORD, nor yet the work which He had done for Israel. Then the sons of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD, and served the Baals, and they forsook the LORD, the God of their fathers, who had brought them out of the land of Egypt, and followed other gods from among the gods of the peoples who were around them, and bowed themselves down to them; thus they

provoked the LORD to anger. So they forsook the LORD and served Baal and the [Ashtaroth](#)." (Judges 2:10-13-see notes)

Perhaps the sad story of Israel's being chosen by God and then choosing to reject His love and His Law can be summed up in the words of the **Psalmist** who records

Then (after the Red Sea deliverance) they believed His words. They sang His praise. **They quickly forgot His works**. They did not wait for His counsel. But craved intensely in the wilderness, and tempted God in the desert." (Ps 106:12-14)

**Spurgeon comments on their forgetfulness** - They seemed in a hurry to get the Lord's mercies out of their memories; they hasted to be ungrateful. They waited not for his counsel, neither waiting for the word of command or promise; eager to have their own way, and prone to trust in themselves. This is a common fault in the Lord's family to this day; we are long in learning to wait for the Lord, and upon the Lord (**Ed: See the inestimable value of waiting on Jehovah** - Isaiah 40:31-see commentary). With Him is counsel and strength, but we are vain enough to look for these to ourselves, and therefore we grievously err.

They believed His **words** but soon forgot His **works** and pursued their **will** not God's will which is always good and acceptable and perfect (See studies in the Topic - **Will of God**). Ezekiel 16 is a summary in story (allegory) form of Israel's **forgetting** and **forsaking**, and should serve as an example and warning for all of us regarding the importance of remembering God's love in choosing us and His works of grace and mercy in all of our lives (Read 1 Corinthians 10:6, 11).

Although I feel the context favors the above interpretation, in fairness one should be aware that some respected commentaries like **Expositor's Bible Commentary** interpret this passage more as a physical birth of the city of Jerusalem without any spiritual implications. Thus **Expositors** comments that

The reference to Jerusalem's father as an **Amorite** and her mother as a **Hittite** has stirred much debate among expositors. However, the thrust of the passage is to show how the city came into being. This was accomplished by the Amorites and the Hittites, for the land of Canaan was also known biblically as the land of the Amorites and the land of the Hittites. ([Gaebelein, F. Editor: Expositor's Bible Commentary OT 7 Volume Set: Books: Zondervan Publishing](#))

**Ezekiel 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. (NASB: Lockman)**

**Brenton:** And as for thy birth in the day wherein thou wast born, thou didst not bind thy breasts, and thou wast not washed in water, neither wast thou salted with salt, neither wast thou swathed in swaddling-bands. (Greek Septuagint)

**John Piper** applies God's picture of Israel in Ezekiel 16 to believers in the Desiring God 2004 National Conference which was entitled Sex and the Supremacy of Christ. Here is Dr Piper's comment on Ezekiel 16:4-10

That's a picture of God's utterly free and undeserved mercy. That is how Israel was chosen. That's how you were brought from death to life and from darkness to light and from unbelief to faith, if you are a believer. "I said to you, 'Live!' and made you flourish. I married you. You are mine." That's how Israel began. That's how the Christian life begins. The mighty mercy of God. ([Sex and the Supremacy of Christ - Part 1](#))

**Comment** - If you wrestle with sexual temptations (and what honest man or woman does not in our society that has jettisoned moral values for the most part - I am writing March, 2019 - if you are reading this years later, I simply cannot imagine what is being "allowed" unless America had experienced a national revival in the intervening time!), then listen to Dr Piper's audio as it is very likely a teaching you have never heard on this somewhat "taboo" subject.

Ezekiel 16:4-5 describe, in birthing symbolism, Israel's predicament at birth without YHWH's help.

**As for your birth, on the day you were born**(Ezek 20:8,13; Ge 15:13; Ex 1:11-14; 2:23,24; 5:16-21; Dt 5:6; 15:15; Josh 24:2; Neh 9:7-9; Hos 2:3; Acts 7:6,[7](#))

Ezekiel describes the procedures and treatment that would ordinarily be administered by the attendant at any normal newborn delivery (and which is still the practice of modern oriental midwives). The attendant (midwife) would cut and tie off the umbilical cord, rinse the blood of birth (most of which originates from the placenta separating from the uterus) from the newborn, clean the skin with



salt water and wrap it in a blanket. The child would then normally be presented to the parents to be named. The clear implication in God's description of Jerusalem's birth is that she had no one to carry out the expected and necessary birth procedures. In other words Jerusalem was born in a helpless state.

**Henry Morris** - God's description of the birth and early growth of the city of Jerusalem, using the symbol of a woman for the city, makes it clear that her history was completely pagan until God Himself made it His "holy city" under David and Solomon. This fact seems to eliminate the possibility that Jerusalem was originally Salem, the "city of peace," ruled by [Melchizedek](#) (Genesis 14:18; [see note on that verse](#)). ([Note](#))

**Block** - Cutting the cord, washing, rubbing down with salt, and clothing the newborn were also customary legal acts of legitimation. In the neglect and abandonment of the infant in the open field, the parent legally relinquished all rights to and responsibilities for the child."

**Your navel cord was not cut**- Referring to not being cut from it's attachment to the placenta. Having delivered some 80 babies in medical school, this is obviously one of the first maneuvers carried out for any newborn given proper attention. God is almost speaking in hyperbole here to exaggerate the effect that Jerusalem's birth without His rescuing hand would not have been a reality.

**nor were you washed with water for cleansing** (La 2:20; La 2:22; Lu 2:7,12)

**You were not rubbed with salt** Rubbing the skin with salt was supposed to make it firm and clean. Wiersbe says "It was believed that the salt had an antiseptic power and would also help strengthen the skin."

**Net Bible Note** states that "Arab midwives still cut the umbilical cords of infants and then proceed to apply salt and oil to their bodies."

**even wrapped in cloths** ("nor wrapped in swaddling cloths" ESV, "nor swaddled at all" KJV)

**Nelson's New Illustrated Bible Dictionary** describes the cloth with which newborns were wrapped:

swaddling band (which) was a long, narrow strip of cloth used to wrap a newborn baby. To swaddle a child was to wrap an infant in strips of cloth, much like narrow bandages. This was believed to ensure the correct early development of the limbs. Thus, swaddling was a mark of parental love and care, while the need for swaddling symbolized the humble, dependent position of the newborn child...Although she could offer Jesus no better crib than an animals manger, Mary showed her mothers love by wrapping her baby in swaddling clothes (Luke 2:7, 12). The baby Jesus in swaddling bands reminds us of the great humility of our Lord in becoming a human being for our sakes." ([Youngblood, R. F., Bruce, F. F., Harrison, R. K., & Thomas Nelson Publishers. Nelson's New Illustrated Bible Dictionary](#))

The **International Standard Bible Encyclopedia** (1915 edition) adds

SWADDLE; SWADDLING-BAND - swod'-l, swod'-ling-band (verb chathal, "enwrap," "swaddle" (Ezek 16:4), noun chathullah, "swaddling-band" (Job 38:9); verb sparganoo, "to wrap in swaddling clothes" (Lk 2:7,12), noun spargana (pl.), "swaddling clothes" (The Wisdom of Solomon 7:4). the King James Version also has "swaddle" (Lam 2:22) for Taphach, literally, "to extend." But the word means "to carry on the outstretched palms of the hands" (compare Tippuchim, "dandled in the hands," Lam 2:20), whence RV's "to dandle"): "To swaddle" and "to swathe" are really the same word, both forms going back to an AS form swethel, "a bandage," but "swaddle" has become the technical term for the wrapping of an infant in the Orient or elsewhere. The oriental swaddling-clothes consist of a square of cloth and two or more bandages. The child is laid on the cloth diagonally and the corners are folded over the feet and body and under the head, the bandages then being tied so as to hold the cloth in position. This device forms the clothing of the child until it is about a year old, and its omission (Ezek 16:4) would be a token that the child had been abandoned. The mention of darkness as a "swaddling-band" at the birth of the sea (Job 38:9) is only a poetic way of saying that the sea, at its creation, was covered with clouds and darkness, and to find any idea of restraint involved is fanciful. ([Orr, J. et al: The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia: 1915](#))

**Believer's Study Bible** - Customarily, when a child was born, the midwife cut the umbilical cord, rubbed the newborn child with salt, water, and oil, and then wrapped it in swaddling cloth for seven days. This was repeated every seven days for 40 days. The picture here is of a child abandoned by its mother and neglected by all from its birth. The identification of Israel with pagan parents was a most impressive way to mark their depraved and sinful nature. ([Criswell, W A. Believer's Study Bible](#))

**Ezekiel 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](#). ([NASB: Lockman](#))

**Brenton:** Nor did mine eye pity thee, to do for thee one of all these things, to feel at all for thee; but thou wast cast out on the face of the field, because of the deformity (crookedness, perversity) of thy person, in the day wherein thou wast born. (Greek Septuagint)

**GWT:** No one who saw you felt sorry enough for you to do any of these things. But you were thrown into an open field. You were rejected when you were born. ([GWT](#))

**NLT:** No one had the slightest interest in you; no one pitied you or cared for you. On the day you were born, you were dumped in a field and left to die, unwanted. ([NLT - Tyndale House](#))

**Tanakh:** No one pitied you enough to do any one of these things for you out of compassion for you; on the day you were born, you were left lying, rejected, in the open field.

## THE UNWANTED CHILD CAST OUT TO DIE

**No eye looked with pity on you to do any of these things** (the "things" in v4) **for you** (Ezekiel 2:6; Isa 49:15; La 2:11,19; 4:3,10)

The Hebrew word for **pity** ([02347](#)) (**chuwc/chus**) literally means to cover and figuratively to be compassionate, take pity, show mercy, the focus being on sparing or delivering one from great punishment. It conveys the basic meaning of to look with pity and often has the added nuance of a feeling which goes out toward one who is in trouble.

**to have compassion on you** - This is not the usual word translated **compassion** (racham) but is the Hebrew word here ([02550](#)) (chamal - word study) connotes the emotional response which results or may result in an action to remove the recipient from impending difficulty. **Chamal** refers to the emotion leading one to spare another or have pity on them.

In context this point is a reminder to Jerusalem that only God **pitied** and had compassion on her as on a baby, saving her from certain destruction, similar to what God did for the baby Moses who was placed in a basket in the Nile (same word **chamal** is used in Ex 2:6).

**Net Bible** adds that "These verbs, "pity" and "spare," echo the judgment oracles in Ezekiel 5:11; 7:4, 9; 8:18; 9:5, 10."

**Adam Clarke** - "This is an allusion to the custom of some heathen and barbarous nations, who exposed those children in the open fields to be devoured by wild beasts who had any kind of deformity, or whom they could not support."

**Spurgeon** - "Cast out into the open field, left in a wilderness where it is not likely that any should pass by, thrown where the cold can smite by night and the heat can blast by day, left where the wild beast goeth about, seeking whom he may devour-such is the estate of human nature: unclothed, unarmed, helpless, exposed to all manner of ravenous destroyers."

**You were thrown out into the open field** (Ge 21:10; Ex 1:22; Nu 19:16; Jer 9:21,22; 22:19) This phrase describes "infanticide" which was a widespread custom in the ancient near east used to eliminate unwanted children.

**Open** - literally "the face of"

**Moses** records this same thought in a parallel passage...

He (God) found him (Israel) in a desert land, and in the howling waste of a wilderness; He encircled him, He cared for him, He guarded him as the pupil of His eye. (Deut 32:10)

**Comment:** God found Israel in a barren, desert land with no one to care for her and called Israel to be His own chosen people. His blessings came to the nation in a remarkable and unlimited way. He was patient with His people. When everyone else abandoned her, God still cared for Israel and provided for her. He had a father's undying love for his children. His love for His people does not mean that He is blind to their sins when they turn aside from Him. Nor does God's love mean that He never brings suffering to His people. The love of God means that God must chastise His people, on occasion, because He loves them. When God's love is expressed in wrath or judgment, it is wrath from a broken heart of love and with a purpose of bringing His people to obedience and maturity. ([Disciple's Study Bible](#))

The **IVP Bible background commentary** adds the historical note that there is "graphic evidence of (infanticide) from the Roman-Byzantine period... found in recent excavations at Ashkelon, where the remains of a hundred infants who had been disposed of in a sewer drain were uncovered. Infanticide was usually employed to get rid of female or malformed children. This was done as a means of either population control or economic necessity, since many villages were barely able to feed and care for healthy children and adults. The fact that the infant's parents "cast it out" into a field has legal implications as well. They are renouncing all legal

claims to the child and leaving it up to God and/or another person to "adopt" and thus save the child's life. (Matthews, V. H., et al The IVP Bible background commentary : Old Testament Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press)

**You were abhorred on the day you were born**- The Septuagint says she was detested because of the crookedness or deformity (skoliostes = crookedness, perversity, dishonesty)

**Abhorred** ([01604](#)) (go'al) is derived from a root which indicates intense aversion which is expressed often in punitive or adverse action). It means hated, loathed, greatly disliked with idea of disgust or intolerance.

Ezekiel 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](#)' ([NASB: Lockman](#))

**Brenton:** And I passed by to thee, and saw thee **polluted** (defiled) in thy blood; and I said to thee, Let there be life out of thy blood: (Greek Septuagint)

**KJV:** And when I passed by thee, and saw thee **polluted** in thine own blood, I said unto thee when thou wast in thy blood, Live; yea, I said unto thee when thou wast in thy blood, Live.

**NLT:** "But I came by and saw you there, helplessly kicking about in your own blood. As you lay there, I said, 'Live!'

**NRSV:** I passed by you, and saw you flailing about in your blood. As you lay in your blood, I said to you, "Live!

**Tanakh:** When I passed by you and saw you wallowing in your blood, I said to you: "Live in spite of your blood." Yea, I said to you: "Live in spite of your blood."

### JEHOVAH PASSES BY AND SAYS "LIVE!"

Jerusalem is portrayed as a helpless babe, cast out, loathed and polluted and would have perished had not God passed by and bestowed His mercy and kindnesses upon her. It is notable that in ancient times (and even in some oriental countries today) female babies were considered undesirable and thus were exposed to the elements, thrown out on the rubbish heap to die. God's kindness of undeserving Jerusalem was not to be a source of pride but a reminder of His bountiful grace, in which He takes the worthless and the unwanted, and not only calls out, Live! but makes the unlovely lovely!. Every believer's life can and should give such radiate such a gutter to glory testimony to the praise of the glory of God's grace.

**Block** says God "pronounces the sentence of life upon the child, otherwise sentenced to certain death. His passion is reflected in the emphatic twofold declaration, In your blood, live!"

**Why did God take notice of Israel?** Moses records the answer that it was God's sovereign choice...

"The LORD did not set His love on you nor choose you because you were more in number than any of the peoples, for you were the fewest of all peoples, 8but because the LORD loved you and kept the oath which He swore to your forefathers, the LORD brought you out by a mighty hand and redeemed you from the house of slavery, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt. (Dt 7:7-8)

**When I passed by you and saw you squirming in your blood** (Ex 2:24,25; 3:7,8; Acts 7:34) (Isa 14:19; 51:23; Mic 7:10; Mt 5:13; Heb 10:29; Rev 14:20)

The Greek Septuagint (and the KJV) translation helps one understand that "**in your blood**" refers to pollution or defilement ("*saw thee polluted in thy blood*").

**Block** - "He pronounces the sentence of life upon the child, otherwise sentenced to certain death. His passion is reflected in the emphatic twofold declaration, In your blood, live!"

**I said...Live!** (Ezek 20:5-10 Ex 19:4-6 De 9:4 Ps 105:10-15,26-37 Jn 5:25 Ro 9:15 Eph 2:4,5 Titus 3:3-7) The same word that spoke the world into existence (Heb 11:3), spoke Israel into existence! And it is the same word that His Spirit spoke to you if you are a believer. Like Israel you were wallowing in your sin and doomed to die, but His Spirit passed by and said "Live!" Thank You Lord. Amen! And beloved that same word still sustains us! Hebrews 1:3 says "And He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature, and **upholds all things by the word of His power**. When He had made purification of sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high."

In ancient times girl children were frequently unwanted, and were exposed. That is, they were simply thrown out on the rubbish heap to die. Being chosen was not to be a source of pride for Judah, but rather a reminder of how gracious God is. He takes the worthless and the unwanted, and not only calls out, **Live!** but makes the unlovely beautiful. Every believer's life can and should give such a glorious gutter to glory testimony, for what God did to the nation, He has done to all of us who are in Christ.

**Ezekiel 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**. (NASB: Lockman)

**Amplified:** I caused you [Israel] to multiply as the bud which grows in the field, and you increased and became tall and you came to full maidenhood and beauty; your breasts were formed and your hair had grown, yet you were naked and bare. ([Amplified Bible - Lockman](#))

**NJB:** and I made you grow like the grass of the fields. You developed, you grew, you reached marriageable age. Your breasts became firm and your hair grew richly, but you were stark naked. ([NJB](#))

**NLT:** And I helped you to thrive like a plant in the field. You grew up and became a beautiful jewel. Your breasts became full, and your hair grew, though you were still naked. ([NLT - Tyndale House](#))

**Young's Literal:** A myriad -- as the shoot of the field I have made thee, And thou art multiplied, and art great, And comest in with an excellent adornment, Breasts have been formed, and thy hair hath grown -- And thou, naked and bare!

**I made you numerous like plants of the field** (Ge 22:17; Ex 1:7; 12:37; Acts 7:17)

Again showing God's undeserved mercy (does not give what we deserve) and amazing grace (gives what we do not deserve).

**Then you grew up, became tall, and reached the age for fine ornaments** (Ezek 16:10-13,16; Ex 3:22; Dt 1:10; 4:8; 32:10-14; 33:26-29; Ne9:18-25; Ps135:4; 147:20; 148:14; 149:2-4; Is 61:10; 62:3) Here Jerusalem is described as a young woman who had reached marriageable age.

Feinberg - "The foundling became a beautiful young woman, yet it is stated that she was naked and bare. The implication may be that she was without wealth and without the benefits of culture and civilization, as the world sees them."

**Your breasts were formed and your hair had grown. Yet you were naked and bare** (Ezek 16:22; Job 1:21; Song 4:5; Ho2:3,9,10; Rev 3:17,18)

**Guzik** - According to Block, your hair grew refers to the metaphorical young woman's pubic hair. "With the passing of the age of innocence and the arrival of sexual maturity, nakedness assumes moral overtones. Whereas the earlier nakedness had made the foundling vulnerable to the elements and marauding animals, now she stands exposed to dangers of a different sort." (Block)

**Ezekiel 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**. (NASB: Lockman)

**Amplified:** Now I passed by you again and looked upon you; behold, you were maturing and at the time for love, and I spread My skirt over you and covered your nakedness. Yes, I **plighted My troth** to you and entered into a covenant with you, says the Lord, and you became Mine. ([Amplified Bible - Lockman](#))

**GWT:** "'I went by you again and looked at you. You were old enough to make love to. So I spread my robe over you, and covered your naked body. I **promised** to love you, and I exchanged marriage vows with you. You became mine, declares the Almighty LORD. ([GWT](#))

**NIV:** "'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. ([NIV - IBS](#))

**NLT:** And when I passed by and saw you again, you were old enough to be married. So I wrapped my cloak

around you to cover your nakedness and declared my marriage vows. I made a covenant with you, says the Sovereign LORD, and you became mine. ([NLT - Tyndale House](#))

**NRSV:** I passed by you again and looked on you; you were at the age for love. I spread the edge of my cloak over you, and covered your nakedness: **I pledged myself to you** and entered into a covenant with you, says the Lord GOD, and you became mine.

**Then I passed by you and saw you** (Ezek 16:6; Dt 7:6-8; 1Sa 12:22; Isa 41:8,9; 43:4; 63:7-9; Je 2:2,3; Je 31:3; Hos 11:1; Mal 1:2; Ro 5:8; 9:10-13)

**Wiersbe** says ""The God of glory appeared to our father Abraham" (Acts 7:2, nkjv), not because Abraham earned it or deserved it, but because of God's great love and grace." (Ibid)

Although this section is an allegorical description, God's **passing by** speaks of His sovereignty over all of the details of Jerusalem's birth.

**behold you were at the time of love**-- refers to her attaining marriageable status. **Behold** is the Hebrew word **hinneh** which indicates becoming aware of something.

**HCSB Study Bible** - The special word for **love** (Hb dodim) in this verse refers to the love that leads to sexual relations (23:17; Sg 1:2,4; 4:10; 5:1; 7:13). Spreading a garment over a person was a proposal of marriage (Ru 3:9). The portrayal of Israel as the Lord's wife (you became Mine) derives from the first of the Ten Commandments, which says we must worship God alone. A wife's obligation to remain true to her husband offered a fitting parallel to Israel's obligations to God. In the Hebrew Torah, Yahweh is called qanna' ("passionate, jealous") toward those who broke faith with Him (Ex 20:5; 34:14). Ezekiel inherited a prophetic tradition in which sexual infidelity was used as a metaphor for Israel's adoption of Canaanite religion (Jer 2:20; Hos 1:2; 2:5-13; 3:1) and for its political alliances with foreign powers (Jer 2:33,36; Hos 8:9).

**Behold** ([02009](#))(hinneh) is an interjection meaning behold, look, now; if. "It is used often and expresses strong feelings, surprise, hope, expectation, certainty, thus giving vividness depending on its surrounding context." (Baker) Hinneh generally directs our mind to the text, imploring the reader to give it special attention. In short, the Spirit is trying to arrest our attention! And so hinneh is used as an exclamation of vivid immediacy (e.g., read Ge 6:13)! Hinneh is a marker used to enliven a narrative, to express a change a scene, to emphasize an idea, to call attention to a detail or an important fact or action that follows (Isa 65:17, Ge 17:20, 41:17).

**Spurgeon** reminds us that "**Behold** is a word of wonder; it is intended to excite admiration. Wherever you see it hung out in Scripture, it is like an ancient sign-board, signifying that there are rich wares within, or like the hands which solid readers have observed in the margin of the older Puritanic books, drawing attention to something particularly worthy of observation." I would add, **behold** is like a divine highlighter, a divine underlining of an especially striking or important text. It says in effect "Listen up, all ye who would be wise in the ways of Jehovah!"

**Net Bible Note** - See similar use of this term (**time of love**) in Ezek 23:17; Prov 7:16; Song of Songs 4:10; 7:13.

**I spread My skirt over you and covered your nakedness** ("spread my **wing** over you" Ezek 16:8NKJV) reflects the ancient custom of espousal as depicted in the book of Ruth. There we read of the encounter between Boaz and Ruth where Boaz awakes at night finding a woman lying at his feet and saying "Who are you?" to which Ruth answered "I am Ruth your maid."

She then beseeches [Boaz](#) "So spread your covering over your maid, for you are a close relative (a goel or kinsman redeemer)" (Ruth 3:9-note)

In Ezekiel the same phrase correlates with the time when God entered into a covenant with the young nation at Mt. Sinai described in Ex 19:5-8:

Now then, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be My own possession among all the peoples, for all the earth is Mine; and you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.' These are the words that you shall speak to the sons of Israel." So Moses came and called the elders of the people, and set before them all these words which the LORD had commanded him. And all the people answered together and said, "All that the LORD has spoken we will do!" And Moses brought back the words of the people to the LORD.

The Hebrew word (kanaph) for skirt, means "extremity" and is used to describe the skirt or flap of a garment. In addition this word can be translated "wings" (as of a bird) and is a beautiful figurative picture in Scripture of God's "wings" protecting His own.

**Wings** (edge, corner, ends, fold, skirt) ([03671](#)) (kanaph) is a noun used to describe a wing, a skirt or corner of a garment. Kanaph conveys the basic meaning of to cover or to describe an attached extremity. The first use of kanaph describes Jehovah's creation of "every winged bird." (Ge 1:21, cp Ge 7:14, Ex 19:4, Isa 8:8). It is used in Scripture as a beautiful illustration of



several facets of Jehovah's care for His children as used in Ex19:4 'You yourselves have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings, and brought you to Myself.' Kanaph is used idiomatically meaning to spread one's wings over another which means to take to wife (Ezek. 16:8). Other idiomatic uses are of an attacking king (Isa. 18:1; Jer. 48:40; 49:22; Ezek. 17:3, 7). Malachi uses kanaph to describe the healing wings of God's Sun of righteousness (Mal. 4:2). Jehovah is often pictured as providing a shadow of protection for His people under His wings (Ru 2:12; Ps. 17:8; 36:7; 57:1; 61:4; 63:7; 91:4). **Kanaph** is used of wings of cherubim (1Ki. 6:24); seraphs (Isa. 6:2); visionary beings like women (Zech. 5:9); insects (Isa. 18:1). Kanaph takes on the sense of the outer edges (garment - 1Sa 15:27), corners, or extremities of something, living or inanimate, and metaphorically for example refers to the end(s) of the world (Isa. 11:12; 24:16; Ezek. 7:2).

David writes "How precious is Thy lovingkindness, O God! And the children of men take refuge in the shadow of Thy**wings** (kanaph).

Boaz uses this metaphorical (figurative) meaning in his beautiful beatitude on Ruth, declaring to her "May the LORD reward your work, and your wages be full from the LORD, the God of Israel, under whose **wings** (kanaph) you have come to seek refuge." (Ruth 2:12-note)

**I spread my skirt** - See Net Bible Note - Heb "**wing**" or "**skirt**." The gesture symbolized acquiring a woman in early Arabia (similarly, see Deut 22:30; Ruth 3:9).

**Henry Morris** - This phrase was a common metaphor for taking a woman as wife (compare Ruth 3:9note). God thenceforth is pictured in the Old Testament as the "husband" of Israel and her capital at Jerusalem (Isaiah 54:5; Hosea 2:19; etc.). ([note](#))

**I also swore to you and entered into a covenant with you** (Ex 4:1-8; 32:13; Ho 2:18-20)

## **GOD CUTS COVENANT WITH ISRAEL**

**God's Word Translation** has "I exchanged marriage vows with you", which is an good paraphrase for in the context the making of a covenant signifies marriage, and emphasizes the figure of Jerusalem as God's wife. (See Covenant: As It Relates to Marriage)

In this passage God cuts covenant with Israel, referring not to the Abrahamic Covenant made with their fathers but to the Mosaic Covenant. As described below God's entering into covenant with Israel was pictured as if He were taking Israel as His bride. He as the Husband expected His wife Israel to act faithfully toward Him but sadly she proved unfaithful.

**Entered into a covenant** - In context this refers to the time when God entered into the conditional Mosaic covenant with the nation of Israel at Mount Sinai. As alluded to above by God's Word Translation, the entering into this covenant signified that He was "marrying" Israel (cf. Jer. 2:2; 3:1ff.; Hos. 2:2-23).

God describes the **Mosaic covenant** in **Exodus** declaring

You yourselves have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings, and brought you to Myself. 'Now then, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be My own possession among all the peoples, for all the earth is Mine and you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. 'These are the words that you shall speak to the sons of Israel.'" So Moses came and called the elders of the people, and set before them all these words which the LORD had commanded him. And all the people answered together and said, "**All that the LORD has spoken we will do!**" (**Ed: These are the "marriage vows" of the wife Israel that she will remain faithful to her covenant**) And Moses brought back the words of the people to the LORD. (Ex 19:4-8) (See Covenant: Abrahamic versus Mosaic)

In **Jeremiah** God alludes to the Mosaic ("marriage") covenant telling his prophet to

Go and proclaim in the ears of Jerusalem, saying, 'Thus says the Lord, "I remember concerning you the devotion of your youth (how eager you were to please me as a young bride long ago, how you loved me and followed me even through the barren wilderness), the love of your betrothals, your following after Me in the wilderness, through a land not sown. Israel was holy to the Lord, the first of His harvest; all who ate of it became guilty; evil came upon them," declares the Lord. (Jer 2:2,3)

In this passage in Jeremiah we see that God remembers the love which Israel professed to Him in the early days of the Mosaic Covenant as she followed Him in the wilderness. Israel's agreement to serve God only is compared to a young girl's oath to know no other man as her husband.

Later in **Jeremiah** Jehovah prophesies the New Covenant which was necessary because she broke her marriage vows in



the Mosaic Covenant

Behold, days are coming...when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, not like the covenant which I made with their fathers in the day I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, **My covenant which they broke, although I was a husband to them**," declares the LORD." (Jer 31:31-32) (See Covenant: Why the New is Better, New Covenant in the Old Testament)

The promise of a New Covenant has not yet been completely fulfilled to Israel and awaits the Second Coming of Christ, at which time Paul says "all Israel will be saved" explaining that...

"a partial hardening has happened to Israel until the fulness of the Gentiles has come in; and thus all Israel will be saved; just as it is written, "THE DELIVERER WILL COME FROM ZION, HE WILL REMOVE UNGODLINESS FROM JACOB." "AND THIS IS **MY COVENANT** (referring to the New Covenant in His blood) WITH THEM, WHEN I TAKE AWAY THEIR SINS." (Ro 11:25-27)

In **Isaiah** God says to Israel that He will bring her back into fellowship with Him declaring that

your **husband** is your Maker, whose name is the LORD of hosts; and your Redeemer is the Holy One of Israel, Who is called the God of all the earth." (Isa 54:5)

Here Jehovah states that He is still her Husband and will not break His covenant promises. Yes (as shown in Ezekiel 16 and elsewhere) Israel had been an unfaithful wife, forsaking her Husband, but Jehovah would not permanently abandoned her. He only gave her opportunity to see what it was like to live in a land where people worshiped false gods. God would call her back and woo her to Himself (see Hos 2:14–23). Specifically Hosea records Jehovah's declaration that

it will come about in that day (in the Day of the Lord and the end of the Great Tribulation)...that you will call Me **Ishi** ("My Husband" denotes affection and intimacy) and will no longer call Me **Baali** ("My Master" speaks of rulership and may be a reminder of Baal worship). Jehovah goes on to add that "I will betroth you to Me forever; Yes, I will betroth you to Me in righteousness and in justice, In lovingkindness and in compassion, and I will betroth you to Me in faithfulness. Then you will know the LORD." (Hos 2:19-20)

So that despite her manifold "indiscretions" against her Husband Jehovah, Israel would no longer be called "a wife forsaken and grieved in spirit, even like a wife of one's youth when she is rejected." (Isa 54:6).

**Can you not see the LORD's commitment to His covenant promises?** He is a covenant keeping God and based on the unconditional covenant with Abraham which is ultimately fulfilled in the New Covenant in Christ, He will one day in the future keep all of His promises to the literal nation of Israel. Beware of the teaching that says the Church is Israel and as such inherits all the promises given to the nation of Israel in the Old Testament. This interpretation is not based on a literal reading of the Scriptures (in my humble opinion). See related discussion of "**The Israel of God**" a phrase which Paul uses in Galatians 6:16.

Later **Ezekiel** records a similar passage in which the Lord God says

On the day when I chose Israel and swore to the descendants of the house of Jacob and made Myself known to them in the land of Egypt, when I swore to them, saying, I am the LORD your God, on that day I swore to them, to bring them out from the land of Egypt into a land that I had selected for them, flowing with milk and honey, which is the glory of all lands." (Ezek 20:5,6)

**Moses** also describes the Abrahamic covenant reminding Israel that

the LORD your God is a compassionate God; He will not fail you nor destroy you nor forget the covenant with your fathers (Abraham, Isaac and Jacob) which He swore to them." (Dt 4:31)

Even Israel's unfaithfulness would not invalidate God's covenant with Abraham.

**So that you became Mine** - in other words Jerusalem was now God's special treasured possession and a "living" testimony to His sovereign grace and lovingkindnesses for all to witness. Jerusalem was not her own but as described below, she rejected God's covenant love and became most unfaithful.

**Morgan** - "In earthly inter-relationships, the marriage relationship is the highest in sanctity, because it is the highest in the experience of Love. By this figure, then, God sets forth for us what His heart feels for us, and what He desires from us in return. His love is of the strongest and tenderest, and He looks for a return of that love in uttermost loyalty."

Ezekiel 16:9 Then I **bathed** you with **water**, **washed off** your **blood** from you and **anointed** you with **oil**. (**NASB: Lockman**)

**Then I bathed you with water, washed off your blood from you** - blood is menstrual issue.

**bathed you with water** (4; 36:25; Ps 51:7; Is 4:4; Jn 13:8-10; 1 Cor 6:11; 10:2; Heb 9:10-14; 1 Jn 5:8; Rev 1:5,6)

**anointed you with oil** (Ps 23:5; 2Cor 1:21; 1Jn 2:20,27)

Ezekiel 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](#). (NASB: Lockman)

**I also clothed you with embroidered cloth** (Ezek 16:7; Ps 45:13,14; Isa 61:3,10; Lu 15:22; Rev 21:2) (13,18; Ex 28:5; 1 Pe 3:3,4) Jerusalem is clothed in materials that are elsewhere used in decorating the tabernacle (embroidered cloth).

**put sandals of porpoise skin on your feet** (Ex 25:5; 26:14)

In the ancient orient, ordinary sandals were made from woven fibrous material, secured with leather thongs. So the point here is that for their sandals to be entirely made of leather would be a luxury and a signifier of both wealth and power.

**I wrapped you with fine linen** (Ex 39:27,28; Rev 7:9-14; 19:8)

**covered you with silk** (Ge 41:42; Pr 31:22; Rev 18:12)

Ezekiel 16:11 I [adorned](#) you with [ornaments](#), [put bracelets](#) on your [hands](#) and a [necklace around](#) your [neck](#). (NASB: Lockman)

**I adorned you with ornaments, put bracelets on your hands** (Ge 24:22,47,53)

**necklace around your neck** (Ge 41:42; Pr 1:9; 4:9; Song 1:10; 4:9; Isa 3:19; Da 5:7,16,29)

Ezekiel 16:12 I also [put a ring](#) in your [nostril](#), [earrings](#) in your [ears](#) and a [beautiful crown](#) on your [head](#) (NASB: Lockman)

**I also put a ring in your nostril** (Ge 35:4; Ex 32:2; 35:22; Nu 31:50; Jdg 8:24; Job 42:11; Pr 25:12; Hos 2:13)

**earrings in your ears, and a beautiful crown on your head** (Lev 8:9; Est 2:17; Isa 28:5; La 5:16; Rev 2:10; 4:4,10)

Ezekiel 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](#). (NASB: Lockman)

**John Piper** continues to apply God's picture of Israel in Ezekiel 16 to believers in the Desiring God 2004 National Conference which was entitled Sex and the Supremacy of Christ. Here is Dr Piper's comment on Ezekiel 16:13-63

There's the picture of the faithless Israel. Her idolatry — her turning from the Lord God to foreign gods — is pictured as the work of a whore. And I say again what I said at the beginning: God created us with sexual passion so that there would be language to describe what it means to cleave to him in love and what it means to turn away from him to others....It may look as though God was finally finished with Israel. Judgment has fallen. The wife was put away. But that is not the last word. God hates divorce. Therefore, though he judge and separate, he will not finally forsake his covenant people — his wife. He will make with her a new covenant, and bring her back to himself at the cost of his Son and by the power of his Spirit. ...

The end of the story is that God, after giving up his faithless wife into the hands of her brutal lovers, will not only take her back, and not only make with her a new and everlasting covenant, but will himself pay for all her sins. Are there debts this prostitute owes? This husband will pay them. "When I atone for . . . all that you have done, declares the Lord." Indeed he will pay with the life of his own Son.

And so in the New Testament, after Jesus Christ has died and risen and is gathering a people for himself and

his heavenly Father, the apostle Paul calls all husbands to live with their wives like this (Ephesians 5:25–27). Model your love on this kind of love .

This is the fulfillment of Ezekiel's vision: "I will remember my covenant with you . . . and I will establish for you an everlasting covenant. . . . and you shall know that I am the Lord . . . when I atone . . . for all that you have done." Jesus Christ creates and confirms and purchases with his blood the new covenant and the everlasting joy of our relationship with God. And the Bible calls it a marriage. And pictures the great day of our final union as "the marriage supper of the Lamb" (Revelation 19:9).

Therefore, God created us in his image, male and female, with personhood and sexual passions so that when he comes to us in this world there would be these powerful words and images to describe the promises and the pleasures of our covenant relationship with him through Christ.

God made us powerfully sexual so that he would be more deeply knowable. We were given the power to know each other sexually so that we might have some hint of what it will be like to know Christ supremely.

Therefore, all misuses of our sexuality (adultery, fornication, illicit fantasies, masturbation, pornography, homosexual behavior, rape, sexual child abuse, bestiality, exhibitionism, and so on) distort the true knowledge of God. God means for human sexual life to be a pointer and foretaste of our relationship with him. ([Sex and the Supremacy of Christ - Part 1](#))

**Thus you were adorned with gold and silver, and your dress was of fine linen, silk, and embroidered cloth.**

**You ate fine flour** (Ezekiel 16:19; Dt 8:8; 32:13,14; Ps 45:13,14; 81:16; 147:14; Ho 2:5)

**you were exceedingly beautiful** (Ezekiel 16:14,15; Ps 48:2; 50:2; Is 64:11; Jer 13:20)

**And advanced to royalty** (Ge 17:6; 1Sa 12:12; 2Sa 8:15; 1Ki 4:21; Ezra 4:20; 5:11; Ps 50:2; Lam 2:15)

The point of this detailed description is that God's beloved wife, Israel, had been given grace upon grace and shown abundant favor so that "she" was lacking no good thing. Why would anyone want to abandon such a Loving Husband as the Almighty God? Such favor and blessing serves to make Israel's subsequent harlotry all the more tragic and all guilt all the greater. To whom much is given much is expected. Judgment will be proportional to the light received - greater light brings greater judgment.

Believers need to take heed lest we fall prey to spiritual harlotry. We have been blessed with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in our Bridegroom Christ Jesus, so why would we want to run to the pig pens of the world? **James** is quite blunt when he warns "You adulteresses, do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God." (James 4:4-note)

**John** commands his readers (and us) - "Do not love the world (stop this - implying that it was already occurring) nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. (**you might want to read that again...parallel it with what Paul says in** 2 Ti 4:8-note) 16 For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world. 17 And the world is passing away, and also its lusts; but the one who does the will of God abides forever. (1 John 2:15-17-note)

Ezekiel 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](#). ([NASB: Lockman](#))

**Then your fame went forth among the nations on account of your beauty**

**Your fame** - literally your name and so your reputation or renown .

**My splendor which I bestowed on you** (Dt 4:6-8,32-38; Joshua 2:9-11; 9:6-9; 1Ki 10:1-13,24; 2Chr 2:11,12; 2Chr 9:23; Lam 2:15)

**Splendor** ([01926](#)) (**hadar**) refers to the best quality which produces a beautiful appearance, majesty and glory. It describes that which is beautiful and instills awe and ascribing of high value or status to what is majestic. It is an appearance that is considered attractive.

The pagan nations were to behold Israel as God's special possession, holy and separate. She was to be a light unto the Gentiles that they might come to know the living and true God. And yet her abundant harlotries profaned Israel and she lost her purpose to be a light among the nations. Believers today need to be careful that God is just as serious about sin today as He was in the Old

Testament and we jeopardize our usefulness to Him and His holy purposes when we walk in step with the world rather than in step with His Spirit.

Writing to believers in the sin sick city of Corinth **Paul** pleaded with (actually he commanded) them...

**Do not be bound** together (present imperative = stop this practice!) with unbelievers; for (note Paul's reasons believers as the Bride of Christ are not to be unequally bound) what partnership have righteousness and lawlessness, or what fellowship has light with darkness? **15** Or what harmony has Christ with Belial, or what has a believer in common with an unbeliever? **16** Or what agreement has the temple of God with idols? (Now Paul gives the positive motivation) For we are the temple of the living God; just as God said, "I WILL DWELL IN THEM AND WALK AMONG THEM; AND I WILL BE THEIR GOD, AND THEY SHALL BE MY PEOPLE. **17** "Therefore (based on such clear logic as just presented), **COME OUT** (aorist imperative = do this now! Don't delay! He is even conveying a sense of urgency!) FROM THEIR MIDST AND **BE SEPARATE** (aorist imperative)," says the Lord. "AND **DO NOT TOUCH** (present imperative = stop doing this!) WHAT IS UNCLEAN; And I will welcome you. **18** "And I will be a father to you, And you shall be sons and daughters to Me," Says the Lord Almighty. **7:1** Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God. (2Cor 6:14-18, 2Cor 7:1-note)

**Paul** reiterated this principle in his last written communication, Second Timothy, explaining to **Timothy**...

Now in a large house there are not only gold and silver vessels, but also vessels of wood and of earthenware, and some to honor and some to dishonor. **21** Therefore, if a man cleanses himself from these things, he will be a vessel for honor, sanctified, useful to the Master, prepared for every good work. **22** Now flee from youthful lusts, and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart. (2 Timothy 2:20; 21; 22-See notes 2:20; 21; 22)

This **splendor...bestowed** on Israel was portrayed by Moses declaration that they were

a holy people to the Lord your God; the Lord your God has chosen you to be a people for His own possession out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth. The Lord did not set His love on you nor choose you because you were more in number than any of the peoples, for you were the fewest of all peoples, but because the Lord loved you and kept the oath which He swore to your forefathers, the Lord brought you out by a mighty hand, and redeemed you from the house of slavery, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt. (**Deut 7:6-8**)

The glorious description of Israel in Ezekiel 16:10-14 recalls the splendor of the nation's golden age under King Solomon, his monarchy marking the height of the nation's prestige on the world scene.

**Guzik** - Because of God's generous love and care, Israel excelled in beauty and was raised to royal status. They became famous among the nations, and it was all because of God's splendor that He had bestowed upon them. It was not of themselves.

"During the reign of King David and during Solomon's early years, Jerusalem was indeed a queenly city and Israel a prosperous kingdom. As long as Israel, Jehovah's wife, obeyed His Word and kept His covenant, He blessed her abundantly just as He promised. He gave her healthy children, fruitful flocks and herds, abundant harvests, and protection from disease, disaster, and invasion." (Wiersbe)

"Incredibly, the charge that Ezekiel would later level at the king of Tyre applied to this poor foundling: 'Your heart was lifted up on account of your beauty; you corrupted your wisdom on account of your splendor.' " (Block)

From a new covenant perspective, it is staggering to think and to believe that we have even more in Jesus Christ than Israel had when they were blessed under the old covenant. Every aspect of God's blessing to Israel under the old covenant (washing, anointing, clothing, providing, adorning, crowning, and so forth) is given in great measure and glory in the new covenant.

F. B. Meyer described how we should react to God's amazing gifts towards us: "Let us dare to believe that it is so. Accept and value your position. In Christ, we are more than tolerated; we are loved. We are more than forgiven; we are arrayed in fair garments. The King greatly delights in us. In His eyes, and because His beauty is upon us, we are all fair."