

Ezekiel – Wicked Thought Leaders

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Three specific groups of people among the exiles were attempting to mislead the exiles. The **prophets** and the **elders** were **the natural “thought leaders”** based on pre-exile status and position. The **“daughters of your people”** seem to be an innovation derived from Babylonian practices – they were utilized by the other groups to control the people. YHWH condemns them all (Ez13:1-3,17-18a, 14:1-3a).

False Prophets: Ezekiel dealt with Priests, Levites, and civic leaders (“elders”) of Jerusalem in the temple vision; now he deals with **“false prophets” and “elders” who are with him in exile** (Ez13:1-7). Jackals are scavengers, **“jackals among ruins”**, implies taking whatever is available after the misfortune of others. The “prophets of Israel” became like that and the “prophets” who came into exile were of the same ilk. The **“prophetic institution”** in Israel had lofty origins: Samuel originated the **“schools of the prophets”** (1Sm3:20, Acts 3:24, 1Sm9:6,19a,22a, 10:5a, 22:5, 2Sm7:3). In the time of Elijah, the prophetic institution was **threatened by Jezebel** (1Kg18:19,7,3b-4). After the defeat of Jezebel, the “schools of the prophets” **flourished under Elisha** (2Kg2:15a, 4:38a, 42-43a). Over time, the prophetic institution apparently degenerated, and YHWH began to deal individually with called prophets in contradistinction to members of the “schools of the prophets”. **Amos was one of the earliest individual prophets:** he came on the scene about generation after the death of Elisha (Am7:10-15). After this “institutional prophets” were generally considered “false prophets” (Ez13:8-9). Ezekiel uses the **metaphor of the “whitewashed wall”** to describe the work of the false prophets (Ez13:10-16).

Blatant Witchcraft: The second half of chapter 13 is unique in the Bible: it deals with **women who were actively engaged in “witchcraft”** – likely they are acting in consort with the “wicked thought leaders”, providing some of the “whitewash” to support the lies (Ez13:17-19). The term **“magic bands”** is from **קֶסֶת** - keseth; **“veils”** is from **מִסְפָּחָה** - mis'pahah, both terms occurs only in this passage. It is impossible to determine the exact nature or function of the “magic bands” and “veils”. YHWH pronounces judgement on the “witches” (Ez13:20-23).

“Elders” Among the Exiles: This is a new topic, but it ties closely to the previous topic. The attitude of these people is **the attitude of the “unpardonable sin”** (Ez14:1-5). The phrase, **“taken their idols into their hearts”**, implies cuddling up to sin, holding it real close because the person really likes it. The phrase, **“set the stumbling block of their iniquity before their faces”**, implies setting the direction of life, the way the person is going, by sin. God requires repentance; the unrepentant will receive retributive justice (Ez14:6-8). YHWH describes the fate of “a prophet” who is drawn into the sin of the inquirer (Ez14:9-11).

Deception by YHWH: What exactly does God mean by **“I have deceived that prophet”** (Ez14:3b,4b,9a,10b)? Even a true “prophet” such as Ezekiel who is drawn into the way of sinners, will suffer the fate of the sinners – God turns that prophet over to the deception. **The “inquirers” have come to the “prophet” in hypocrisy;** YHWH answers their inquiry with condemnation; if the “prophet” does NOT see through the “hypocrisy”, he is given over to the deception and suffers the fate. This is very much a warning to Christians, to us, to **stand strong in faith** (Rm5:2a, 15:1a, 1Cr16:13).

Organized Opposition: The “false prophets”, the “witches”, and the “idoltrous elders” clearly represent an organized challenge to Ezekiel and the mission God gave him. **Jeremiah even got involved in the battle** (Jr29:20-21,24-25a,30-32). These episodes are very much cases-in-point demonstrating how carefully Ezekiel put his book together – they are presented as if they were being reported as they were happening. This leads into the next episode.

Individual Responsibility and Covenant Curses: The last half of chapter fourteen serves as a **transition into the “wisdom” section of the Book of Ezekiel**, chapters fifteen through nineteen. YHWH reverts to a **“hypothetical” situation, almost a parable**, which obviously represents the actual situation of Jerusalem (Ez14:12-14). Jerusalem is represented by, **“a land”**, the land of Israel, which has attained the full measure of sin and God has determined its judgement. **“What if” three men renowned for “wisdom” and “righteousness” were in the land**, could they redeem any of those under judgement? The answer is, no, **God would only spare their lives**. The question is repeated three times with varying covenant curses; the result is always the same (Ez14:15-20). This is the message for the exiles, **there would be no early return to Jerusalem**, the destruction and desolation were determined (Ez14:21-23). There will be a few eyewitnesses of the destruction to confirm that it has occurred.

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