

# Jerusalem as a Boiling Pot

## Ezeki'el 24: 1-14

**DIG:** What happened in Jerusalem on the same day this word came to Ezeki'el? What figures of speech does Ezeki'el use to describe the City and its leadership? What does each part represent; the boiling pot (Ezeki'el 11:3, 24:3-6)? The choice pieces of meat (Ezeki'el 11:3, 24:4)? The rusty scum that had encrusted the pot (Ezekiel 24: 6 and 11-13)? What will happen to Tziyon? Why did the choice pieces mistakenly think their names would be omitted from the "pot-boiler" (Ezeki'el 11:1-8)? What does their uncovered blood represent? As with Nineveh, God sometimes relents of His judgment (see Jonah Ax - The Ninevites Believed God)? What is God's reason for threatening Jerusalem? How do they respond? On what basis was YHVH judging them? Is that just?

**REFLECT:** Why does God warn you about His punishments beforehand? What does He hope will happen? Are you feeling the heat anywhere? Is the LORD warning you about anything? If you are on Ha'Shem's hot seat or in His boiling pot, what does He want you to do about that? As for the corruption of city or government officials in your area, what are some "backburner issues" which Ezeki'el might be prompting you to bring to the front burner and "pile on the wood?"

**January 10, 588 BC during the eleven-year reign of Zedekiah**

One is struck with the detail as to the day, month and year. Ezeki'el was three hundred miles away from the scene of the invasion of Jerusalem by the forces of king Nebuchadnezzar; but he was fully aware of what was happening in the doomed city. What was the purpose of God's revelation to Ezeki'el? It was meant to show that God was carrying out His will. Ezeki'el was commanded to write down the very day because of its importance and because the nation would have tangible proof of the accuracy of his prophecies.<sup>312</sup>

**The setting:** In the ninth year of the reign of Zedekiah's eleven year reign, in the tenth month on the tenth day, the word of ADONAI came to me (Ezeki'el 24:1). Son of man, record this date, this very date, a day of national calamity, because the king of Babylon has laid siege to Jerusalem this very day (Ezeki'el 24:2). This was the day Ezeki'el had been pointing to for over four years. The date was so significant that it is mentioned in Second Kings 25:1, Jeremiah 39:1, 52:4, and Zechariah 8:19.

Tell this rebellious people a parable and say to them (Ezeki'el 24:3a). Thirteen previous times Ezekiel had called the Israelites a rebellious people. Time was running out. Ezekiel's words were useless. Actions were needed. It was the beginning of the end.

**The boiling pot song:** The prophet was instructed to declare an allegory. It begins with a song, probably a popular work song used by members of the exiled community. The song itself is not particularly allegorical; it introduces the theme of the detailed allegory that is to follow. The song simply illustrates the daily routine of domestic life. This is what Adonai ELOHIM says: Put on the boiling pot; put it on and pour water into it (Ezekiel 24:3b). The imagery of the boiling pot, previously used by the inhabitants of Jerusalem for their deceptive hopes (Ezekiel 11:3), is now to be given its true interpretation by the prophet in the light of current events. Setting the boiling pot on the stove and pouring water into it, the first stage in the process of cooking, represent the siege of Jerusalem that came before the actual battle had begun.

Put into it the pieces of meat, all choice pieces - the thigh and the shoulder. Fill it with the choicest cuts, taken from the pick of the flock, and pile bones underneath. Bring it to a rolling boil, till it's all cooked, even the bones (Ezekiel 24:4-5 CJB). The pieces of meat, gathered in the pot symbolize the inhabitants of Yerushalayim and the fugitives from the other towns who sought refuge there. The bones are a graphic illustration of the extreme cruelty of the Babylonian attack.

**The allegory:** Therefore Adonai ELOHIM says: Woe to the City drenched in blood, to the pot whose rust (Hebrew: *chel'ah*) is in it, and whose rusty scum will not go away, it's like a permanent, indelible mark. The pot, it seems, had not been cared for; it was covered with rusty scum that ruined the meal so the contents of the pot had to be dumped on the ground. People in Jerusalem, who had felt secure from Babylon's onslaught, would be dragged from the City into exile with no regard for their position in society. Empty it piece by piece, without troubling to draw lots (Ezekiel 24:6 CJB). The population within Tziyon will perish or be exiled in deportations at different times (see *Gs - In the Thirty-Seventh Year of the Exile, Jehoiachin was Released from Prison*). In the fire of God's judgment, Jerusalem's "impurities" would float to the surface. The corruption could not be hidden. She was as unappealing as rusty scum floating on the surface of a pot full of stew.

Then Ezekiel, under the inspiration of the Ruach HaKodesh, points out Jerusalem's guilt. For her blood is still in her; she poured it on bare rock; she did not pour it on the ground, to cover it with dust (Ezekiel 24:7 CJB). The rabbis interpreted this verse as referring to the blood of the prophet Zechariah, son of Jehoiada, who was stoned to

death in the courtyard of the LORD (Second Chronicles 24:20-21). According to Jewish legend, the blood boiled at the spot where Zechariah was murdered for 252 years. But after the Babylonians had captured Zion, the Babylonian general Nebuzaradan saw this boiling blood and in an effort to appease the blood, he slaughtered thousands of Jews to no avail. The blood continued to boil. Finally Nebuzaradan appealed to the dead prophet Zechariah to stop the killing lest the whole nation perish. And at that point, the blood stopped boiling. The legend goes on to say that because of this experience the Nebuzaradan converted to Judaism (Midrash to Lamentations, Proem 23).

Jerusalem's guilt was so great that it represented the stain of blood, like rusty scum, on a bare rock. So in order to rouse My fury and excite My vengeance, I have fixed her blood there on the bare rock, where it will not be covered (Ezk 24:8; Lev 17:13). This blood would always be visible and testify to the fact that blood had been shed throughout Jerusalem. We see that same type of figure in Genesis 4:10; Job 16:18 and Isaiah 26:21).

**The application:** Therefore Adonai ELOHIM, as the supreme Judge, pronounces sentence: Woe to the city drenched in blood! I myself will make a huge bonfire, heap on the wood, light it, cook the meat and add the spices - the bones can just be burned. So thorough will the punishment be that the Holy City will be destroyed (Ezeki'el 24:9-10) CJB). Isra'el heaped sin upon sin, so God will also heap on fuel for her punishment.

Put the empty pot on the coals, heat it till its copper bottom glows, till its impurity melts inside it, and its rust is burned away (Ezeki'el 24:11 CJB). After all the contents had been poured out, then the pot would eventually melt down with its rusty scum. This was a symbol of Zion's purification after being emptied of its inhabitants. After the inhabitants of Zion were taken captive, the City and the Temple were burned down.

But the effort is in vain: its layers of rust will not leave it; so into the fire with its rusty scum (Ezeki'el 24:12 CJB). The rusty scum, or the stain of blood, could not be removed by fire until the whole pot was destroyed. Likewise, Jerusalem's sin was so indelibly part of her, the only way of removing the sin was to destroy the City.<sup>313</sup>

Because of your filthy lewdness, because you refused to be purified when I wanted to purify you; now you will not be purified from your rusty scum until I have satisfied My wrath on you (Ezeki'el 24:13 CJB). YHVH had tried to purify His people from their impurities but they resisted. So they would experience the purifying work of God's wrath. His patience had run out; the time had come for Him to purify.

**Ha'Shem's commitment:** I, ADONAI, have spoken it, and it will happen. I will do it, I will not turn back I will not refrain or spare or relent. They will judge you as your ways and deeds deserve, says Adonai ELOHIM (Ezeki'el 24:14 CJB). The mercy of ADONAI prompts Him to withhold judgment as long as possible to enable people to repent (Second Peter 3:8-10), but He does not wait indefinitely. A time comes when Ha'Shem punishes wickedness.<sup>314</sup> **The Babylonians, who would be the executors of God's judgment would inflict upon them the punishment that was equal with their monstrous crimes.**

The siege was to be a long one, but when **the people in Jerusalem** received confirmation of the **date** on which it began, they would also be convinced of the inevitability of its conclusion. Consequently, in this allegory of **the boiling pot**, many of **Ezeki'el's** earlier prophecies were moving towards a hopeless climax; **he** had spoken of the coming destruction of **the Holy City of David**, but many no doubt consoled themselves with the thought that **the prophet's** sayings were merely the ranting of a religious fanatic. But now, for those who would believe, the dye was cast.

The nature of the allegory introduces the theme of uselessness. A normal **pot** didn't need to fear any fire; it was designed to sit on fire. So too a nation need not fear adversity; it exists not only to cope with adversity, but also to flourish under stress. But **the Sacred City** had forgotten the reason for its existence, and so had become useless to its **Founder**. The rusty scum that corroded the nation's soul had been allowed to spread, so that it had no strength in adversity. Those who would seek to retain the usefulness for which they were created must constantly scour the rust. If it is allowed to spread, usefulness diminishes and there remains no ability for converting adversity into strength. Since what is useless . . . is eventually destroyed.<sup>315</sup>