

Five of Seven

The Decimation and Assimilation of the Nations

- 1 Ammon** ^{15:1} The word of the Lord came to me: ¹⁶“Son of man, set your face toward the Ammonites and prophesy against them. ³Say to the Ammonites, Hear the word of the Lord God: Thus says the Lord God, Because you said, ‘Aha!’ over my sanctuary when it was profaned, and over the land of Israel when it was made desolate, and over the house of Judah when they went into exile,
- 2 Moab** ⁸“Thus says the Lord God: Because Moab and Seir said, ‘Behold, the house of Judah is like all the other nations,’
- 3 Edom** ¹²“Thus says the Lord God: Because Edom acted revengefully against
- ⁴therefore behold, I am handing you over to the people of the East for a possession, and they shall set their encampments among you and make their dwellings in your midst. They shall eat your fruit, and they shall drink your milk. ⁵I will make Rabbah a pasture for camels and Ammon a fold for flocks. **Then you will know that I am the Lord.**
- ⁶For thus says the Lord God: Because you have clapped your hands and stamped your feet and rejoiced with all the malice within your soul against the land of Israel, ⁷therefore, behold, I have stretched out my hand against you, and will hand you over as plunder to the nations. And I will cut you off from the peoples and will make you perish out of the countries; I will destroy you. **Then you will know that I am the Lord.**
- ⁹therefore I will lay open the flank of Moab from the cities, from its cities on its frontier, the glory of the country, Beth-jeshimoth, Baal-meon, and Kiriathaim. ¹⁰I will give it along with the Ammonites to the people of the East as a possession, that the Ammonites may be remembered no more among the nations, ¹¹and I will execute judgments upon Moab. **Then they will know that I am the Lord.**
- ¹³therefore thus says the Lord God, I will stretch out my hand against Edom and cut off from it man and beast. And I will make it desolate; from Teman even to Dedan they shall fall by the sword.

the house of Judah and has grievously offended in taking vengeance on them, ¹⁴And I will lay my vengeance upon Edom by the hand of my people Israel, and they shall do in Edom according to my anger and according to my wrath, and **they shall know my vengeance**, declares the Lord God.

4 Philistia ¹⁵“Thus says the Lord God: Because the Philistines acted revengefully and took vengeance with malice of soul to destroy in never-ending enmity, ¹⁶therefore thus says the Lord God, Behold, I will stretch out my hand against the Philistines, and I will cut off the Cherethites and destroy the rest of the seacoast. ¹⁷I will execute great vengeance on them with wrathful rebukes. Then **they will know that I am the Lord**, when I lay my vengeance upon them.”

5 Tyre ^{26:1}In the eleventh year, on the first day of the month, the word of the Lord came to me: ²“Son of man, because Tyre said concerning Jerusalem, ‘Aha, the gate of the peoples is broken; it has swung open to me. I shall be replenished, now that she is laid waste,’ ³therefore thus says the Lord God: Behold, I am against you, O Tyre, and will bring up **many nations against you**, as the sea brings up its waves. ⁴They shall destroy the walls of Tyre and break down her towers, and I will scrape her soil from her and make her a bare rock. ⁵She shall be in the midst of the sea a place for the spreading of nets, for I have spoken, declares the Lord God. And she shall become plunder for the nations, ⁶and her daughters on the mainland shall be killed by the sword. **Then they will know that I am the Lord.**

Ezekiel 25:1-26:6

Bye, Bye gods

In the first century AD, the Jesus had one main enemy throughout his ministry. This was the chief priests, scribes, and Pharisees who followed him around nearly everywhere he went. Our Lord usually spoke kindly to people. But he saved some pretty harsh rhetoric for these guys calling them among other things, “Hypocrites” on my occasions (Matt 6:2, 5, 16; 7:5; 15:7; 22:18; 23:13, 15, 23, 25, 27, 29; also in Mark 7:6; Luke 6:42; 12:56; 13:15), Blind Guides / Blind Fools / Blind Men (Matt 23:16, 17, 19, 24, 26; also 15:14), Sons of those who murdered the prophets (Matt 23:31; Luke 11:47–48), Serpents and a Brood of Vipers (Matt 23:33; also Matt 3:7; 12:34; Luke 3:7), Whitewashed Tombs (Matt 23:27), and so on. These same men eventually turned him over to the authorities and were directly responsible for putting him to death—humanly speaking.

Things didn’t get any better 100 years later. The Jews of the early-mid second century found themselves without a temple, persecuted, and scattered as they had become in the days of the exile. But more than that, they found themselves losing thousands of their own people to this new cult that had sprung up around the Son of God. Jesus of Nazareth,

they were being told, was the prophesied King who was turning fulfilling the promises long spoken about in the prophets of old.

This, they could not tolerate. And so a **concerted campaign** was launched to systematically destroy perhaps the single most powerful argument that these new Christians were using to convince the elect people that Jesus was their Messiah. There are about 10 passages in the OT that deal with a group of beings called “**sons of God.**” These are **Gen 6:2, 4; Deut 32:8, 43; Job 1:6, 2:1; 38:7; Ps 29:1, 82:6, 89:5.** Of these, very serious **divergences of interpretation** suddenly sprang up at precisely this moment in time. There were also **new translations** of the Hebrew not found in the LXX, sometimes **entire sections of verses mysteriously just dropped out** altogether, and sometimes they even **changed the words of the Hebrew.** Over night, half of these passages were in great dispute, and all over the same new interpretation unknown prior to this time. The “sons of god” were now being interpreted as human beings rather than fallen angelic creatures from heaven. Why? As I argue in my new book, *The Battle for the Bible’s Truth*, **it was because Christians** were using these passages, following their Savior himself, to show that Jesus was God’s son sent from heaven, but unlike

the other sons of god, Jesus was their Creator and was in fact the very God of the OT in human flesh.

Something had to be done about this and so, they started tampering with the tradition, the translation, and even the texts of holy Scripture. We have many Church Fathers that attest to this, so we aren't left guessing. Two of the earliest who likely saw these changes occur in their own lifetimes were Justin Martyr who said, “Your Rabbis have absolutely expunged many passages out of the Septuagint version, as I would have you to know. Still, I will argue with you even from those received passages which you still allow, which if your Rabbis had understood, be assured they would have expunged them” (Justin, *Dialogue with Trypho* 71); and Irenaeus who was even more blunt. “If the Jews had known that we should have made use of those testimonies that are to be drawn from the Scriptures, they would never have hesitated themselves to burn their own Scriptures” (Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 3.21.1).

Two of the most egregious sins they committed against God's word were the literal changes they put directly into Deuteronomy 32, the Song of Moses. The first occurs in Deut 32:8, where they literally changed the word “elohim” to “Israel,” so that Moses now asks the people to remember

when God divided the nations according to the number of the “sons of *Israel*.” This had the crippling effect of neutering the LORD who inherits Israel, for no one after that moment read the LORD here as the Son of God who inherits his nation in parallel to the heavenly sons of God who inherited theirs. Why should they? There are no sons of God—no angels—here anymore. They’ve literally vanished from the text.

The **second change** is perhaps even more striking in terms of the amputation they performed on the passage. The LXX reads, “Rejoice, ye heavens, with him, and *let all the angels of God* [some read “*sons of God*”] *worship him*; rejoice ye Gentiles, with his people, and let all the sons of God strengthen themselves in him, for he will avenge the blood of his sons, and he will render vengeance, and recompense justice to his enemies, and will reward them that hate him; and the Lord shall purge the land of his people.” Meanwhile, **the Hebrew** suddenly saw an entire appendage of this verse otherwise inexplicably removed. “Rejoice, you nations, *with His people*; For He will avenge the blood of His servants, And will return vengeance on His adversaries, And will atone for His land *and His people*.” The sons of God? Gone. Yet, they are there in the Dead Sea Scrolls. “Rejoice, O

heavens, together with him; and bow down to him all you gods, for he will avenge the blood of his sons, and will render vengeance to his enemies, and will recompense those who hate him, and will atone for the land of his people.” Why would they do this to this verse? Because **Hebrews quotes it** in relation to Jesus. **“Let all God’s angels worship him.”** Take away the sons of God and suddenly, the Son of God connection to them with Jesus and Jesus’ connection to the angels is removed. Apologetic defeated.

What does any of this have to do with the passage we are looking at today? Michael Heiser gives a fascinating answer to that question and it is one that greatly enhances our understanding of just what is going on as God judges these wicked nations.

Five of Seven—Ezekiel 25:1-26:6

We are **beginning our study of the fourth major section** of Ezekiel: *The Oracles Against the Nations* (OANs). These are common prophetic targets in many of the other OT prophetic books, and we looked at all that, including how they presuppose that the **nations are in covenant with God**

though some kind of covenant of works/creation relationship last time in our introduction to them.

These oracles are sandwiched between Jerusalem being besieged (Ch. 24) and Jerusalem's fall (Ch. 33). (Technically, chiastically speaking, Ch. 24 is its own section, paralleled by Ch. 33.) The besiegement of Jerusalem began Jan 15, 588 BC (2Kg 25:1; Jer 52:4; Ezek 24:1-2). Seven of the OANs are given dates, but they are not in strict chronological order: Ezek 29:1-16 (Jan 7, 587); Ezek 30:20-26 (Apr 29, 587); Ezek 31:1-8 (June 21, 587); Ezek 26:1-21 (Feb/Mar, 586); Ezek 32:1-16 (Mar 3, 585), Ezek 32:17-32 (Mar 17, 585), Ezek 29:17-21 (Apr 26, 571). The remaining oracles are all undated.

All of the oracles come to Ezekiel after Jerusalem is besieged. However, two of the oracles actually come after Jerusalem falls and the temple is destroyed on July 18, 586. That means that there must be some other reason for putting the oracles in the order in which we find them. The most basic idea we find is that there are seven nations whom God sets in his telescopic sight. The last, Egypt, has seven oracles against it. Thus, they unfold like the seals and trumpets and bowls in Revelation.

But scholars have done deeper work on them and have demonstrated that together they form a deeply complex literary masterpiece. Perhaps the most interesting is that they form a set of panels: A, B ... G // A', B' ... G' (see chart below).¹ If this is correct, then our chapter today (Ch. 25) parallels the oracle against Sidon. Given that Tyre and Sidon are neighboring cities (and the only cities in the oracles), that makes

a. Oracles against first four Levantine nations: Ammon, Moab, Edom, Philistia (25)	a'. Oracles against last Levantine nation: Sidon (with implications for Israel) (28:20-26)
b. Judgment oracle vs. Tyre (A): introduction (26:1-6)	b'. Judgment oracle vs. Egypt (A): introduction (29:1-16)
c. Babylon as agent of divine judgment on Tyre (26:7-11)	c'. Babylon as agent of divine judgment on Egypt (29:17-30:19)
d. Judgment oracle vs. Tyre (A'): restatement (26:12-18)	d'. Judgment oracle vs. Egypt (A'): restatement (30:20-26)
e. Judgment oracle vs. Tyre (B): Tyre descends to the Pit (26:19-21)	e'. Judgment oracle vs. Egypt (B): Pharaoh and Egypt descend to the Pit (31:1-18)
f. Lamentation (<i>qinâh</i>) for Tyre (27)	f'. Lamentation (<i>qinâh</i>) for Pharaoh and Egypt (32:1-16)
g. Judgment oracle vs. Tyre (B'): prince of Tyre descends to the Pit (28:1-10)	g'. Judgment oracle vs. Egypt (B'): Egypt and Pharaoh descend to the Pit (32:17-32)

Table 7.5. D-D': Ezekiel 25-28:10 and Ezek 28:20-Ezekiel 32, oracles against the foreign nations; block parallelism (panel structure).

¹ Chart in Richard M. Davidson, "The Chiastic Literary Structure of the Book of Ezekiel," *To Understand the Scriptures: Essays in Honor of William H. Shea*, ed. David Merling (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University, 1997). 85.

good sense. That is all the more so when you compare the four oracles in Ch. 25 with 28:20-23, **they all have nearly same exact formula**: 1. The Lord says something; 2. Set your face against a nation/city; 3. Accusation: what they have done (absent in Sidon); 4. “**therefore**” God will do something against them; 5. Recognition: So that they might “**know that I am the LORD.**” The main difference is that in Ch. 25 they have sinned against Israel while in Sidon, there is no sin mentioned, only that God will be glorified, so the former are horizontal focused while the latter is vertical.

The fifth and seventh places prophesied against are **Tyre and Egypt**, but they get far more play time than the other five. In fact, they parallel one another very beautifully almost oracle for oracle (Davidson treats the one undated oracle as part of C’). And yet, the Hebrew text actually has the major division break (פ , *pe* called a *petuhah*) at **26:6** *after the first section of the Tyre cycle (26:1-6)*, meaning they saw this as part of Ch. 25. And, this actually matches the style of all of Ch. 25, so much so that you can create a simple two-column weave of them all. Therefore, we will include this in our study today, thus causing us to look at **Five of Seven** of the oracles. A good Borg name if ever there was one. And that’s appropriate, because in these oracles, God is going to

give them over to be assimilated by the “peoples of the east.”
“Resistance is futile. Your life as it has been, is over. Your biological and technological distinctiveness will be added to our own. From this time forward, you will service us.”

Oracle Against Ammon (25:1-7)



We begin with an oracle against Ammon. “The word of the Lord came to me: ‘Son of man, set your face toward the Ammonites and prophesy against them’” (Ezek 25:1-2). Who are the Ammonites? In their first three appearances in

the Bible, we learn that their original ancestor was **Ben-ammi** (“**Son of My People**”), the product of the deceitful union of **Lot**, nephew of Abram, and his youngest daughter who caused him to get drunk in order to sleep with him to continue on his family line (**Genesis 19:34, 38**). Their territory or “allotment” was the directly east of Jerusalem and the Jordan River and then going north for a bit (**Num 21:24; Deut 2:19**), in the northeast of today’s Jordan. In fact, its capitol city is Amman to this day. Theirs was also a land filled with **Rephaim** (giants; **Deut 2:20**), a theme we will return to. Essentially then, they are Israel’s incestuous cousins.

Yet despite sharing a family line with Abraham, and despite God explicitly protecting their land as their inheritance (**Deut 2:19**), the Ammonites turned against their cousins and **delighted over Jerusalem’s ruin**—making Yahweh’s judgment all the more pointed. Thus comes **the message**, “**Say to the Ammonites, Hear the word of the Lord God: Thus says the Lord God, Because you said, ‘Aha!’ over my sanctuary when it was profaned, and over the land of Israel when it was made desolate, and over the house of Judah when they went into exile...**” (**Ezek 25:3**). The sin here is **gloating**, basically giving a high-five to each other when Israel was destroyed. It is pure malicious joy at **the triple desecration** of

the sanctuary, land, and people. It's a terrible warning to those who gloat over the death of anyone—"I do not delight in the death of the wicked," says God in this very book, on several occasions. How then can we, even if it be our worst personal or public enemies?

But this is *God's people* they gloated over and that is vital to this series of oracles. For even though God brought this destruction upon his chosen nation for their sins, Ammon decided they should cheer the Babylonian on.

And so we move to **the judgment**: "Therefore behold, I am handing you over to the people of the East for a possession" (4a). Who are these "people of the east?" You might think this refers to the Babylonians who "shall set their encampments among you and make their dwellings in your midst. They shall eat your fruit, and they shall drink your milk" (4b). They meaning would be they will invade you. They will move into your homes. They will eat your food. They will sleep in your beds. Imagine if that was you and China did that. How would you feel?

But this **isn't the Babylonian**, and therefore, the prophecy is much *worse* than that. "I will make Rabbah a pasture for camels and Ammon a fold for flocks" (5a). In **Jeremiah 49:28**, the peoples of the east with their

camels and sheep refers to the nomadic tribes like the Kedarites. In other words, **you won't even be here** to watch them move in. You will be assimilated and remembered no more.

And **why?** We get some strange **covenant language** here, “**Then you will know that I am the Lord**” (5b). We've seen it throughout the prophecies against Judah, but its **origins go back to Egypt**. “**I will take you to be my people, and I will be your God, and you shall know that I am the LORD your God, who has brought you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians**” (Ex 6:7). Now, Ammon is not Yahweh's chosen people. They belong to one of the other sons of God. Nevertheless, this shows that they are in fact in covenant with him, as **Isaiah 24:5** declares. And this actually, amazingly, **will become good news, but we aren't ready for that yet**.

The whole thing **virtually repeats itself** in **vv 6-7**. “**For thus says the Lord God: Because you have clapped your hands and stamped your feet and rejoiced with all the malice within your soul against the land of Israel, therefore, behold, I have stretched out my hand against you, and will hand you over as plunder to the nations. And I will cut you off from the peoples and will make you perish out of the countries; I**

will destroy you. Then you will know that I am the Lord.”

William Greenhill said,

Nature teaches people to sympathize with those who are in misery, not to multiply their miseries by scoffs and mocks. But the nations showed themselves impious and unnatural in dealing so with the Jews. Similar things may God’s people expect now from the world. If they meet with breaking for their sins, the people of the world will say, “Aha,” so would we have it; others’ mourning is their music, others’ tears are their wine.²

Did we not see this in the disgusting inhumane TikTok videos celebrating the murder of Charlie Kirk? That’s just one example among thousands. This kind of behavior is **reprehensible to God** and it has no place in the life of a Christian. God can and has dealt with such behavior most severely. Just ask Ammon, whom Nebuchadnezzar brought under subjection to himself just **five years after Jerusalem** was destroyed (**Josephus**, *Antiquities of the Jews* 10.9.7). From that point onward, the Ammonites slowly began to lose their identity and by the time of the Persians (539-332 BC), it had faded as a

² Carl L. Beckwith, Timothy George, and Scott M. Manetsch, eds., *Ezekiel, Daniel: Old Testament*, vol. 12, Reformation Commentary on Scripture (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2012), 139.

distinct kingdom. Today, no one identifies as “Ammonite.” Their capital’s name lives on as Amman, Jordan—but the people? Gone, absorbed, forgotten. Yet the name of the LORD endures forever.

Oracle Against Moab (25:8-11)

Next, we come to an oracle against Moab. “Thus says the Lord God: Because Moab and Seir” (Ezek 25:8a). This is unique because it mentions two places. We’ll talk about Seir in a moment. Who is Moab? They first appear just before Ammon, for Moab is the product of the deceitful union of Lot and his oldest daughter who caused him to get drunk in his tent the night before the younger did (Gen 19:33, 37). Moab means “Water/Seed of My Father.”³ Curiously, they are also found in Deut 2 along with Ammon. Their territory of “allotment” was just south of Ammon on the east of the Jordan (Deut 2:10). They also were a land of Rephaim giants (11). Moses died on overlooking the Promised Land from Mount Nebo in Moab (Deut 34:1ff).

There is a prophecy from Baalam about the Messiah that he would crush the head of Moab (Num 24:17), even though

³ Stelman Smith and Judson Cornwall, *The Exhaustive Dictionary of Bible Names* (North Brunswick, NJ: Bridge-Logos, 1998), 177. I’m taking all the names in this sermon from this resource.

Messiah's grandmother Ruth was a Moabite! That is about to intersect with Ezekiel's oracle. Next comes the message, "[You] said, 'Behold, the house of Judah is like all the other nations'" (Ezek 25:8b). This sin is worse than the previous. They are now openly mocking Israel's covenantal status with Yahweh. "You were Yahweh's portion (Deut 32:9)? How well did that work out for you? He couldn't protect you from Nebuchadnezzar! Pathetic god!"

Because of their mockery, God comes to them in judgment. "Therefore I will lay open the flank of Moab from the cities, from its cities on its frontier, the glory of the country, Beth-jeshimoth, Baal-meon, and Kiriathaim" (Ezek 25:9). The three cities are all located on Moab's northern and northeastern frontier and they represent its greatest "glory." Beth-jeshimoth means "House of Desolations." Israel camped there just before crossing the Jordan (Num 33:49). Baal-meon means "Lord/Baal of Habitation." Reuben rebuilt this city and changed its name (Num 32:38). Kiriathaim means "Double City" and Reuben also rebuilt it (37). The first name is ironic and foreshadows Moab's coming destruction. The second asks rhetorically, is Baal going to help you? The third symbolizes human strength and that powerless against the LORD.

“Flanking” Moab is literally *ktp* (“shoulder”), and designates a slope of a mountain range and by extension “side.” It is clearly a military idea of how Moab’s gates, gods, and double cities will not protect them. However, it along with “open” (*pth*), which has the sense of “laying bare or denuding”⁴ may be a euphemism of “baring” the shoulder,⁵ and as such reminds me of the lewd conduct of their original mother, Lot’s daughter. Their end will be just like their beginning.

The oracle concludes by putting the two brothers together, “I will give it along with the Ammonites to the people of the East as a possession, that the Ammonites may be remembered no more among the nations, and I will execute judgments upon Moab. Then they will know that I am the Lord” (Ezek 25:10-11). Josephus tells us that Nebuchadnezzar also took Moab at the same time as Ammon and today, no one identifies as a Moabite.

Oracle Against Moab (25:12-14)

I said we would return to Seir and we will do that now in the third oracle, this time against Edom, for Seir and

⁴ Moshe Greenberg, *Ezekiel 21–37: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 22A, Anchor Yale Bible (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2008), 520.

⁵ John H Walton, *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary (Old Testament): Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel, Daniel*, vol. 4 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2009), 458.

Edom are the same thing. “Thus says the Lord God: Because Edom...” (Ezek 25:12a). Edom is like the word *adam* (ground/earth) and means Red Earth, a term that certainly harkens to their allotment which was south of Moab in the land of Petra in the midst of the mountains of Seir (Deut 2:5)—the Middle East’s version of Utah. Seir means Hairy and it a play on a word for a goat or a goat-demon/satyr (*sair*). You can probably tell from this who the Edomites were, if you know the story of Jacob stealing Esau’s birth-right, for he put on a hairy coat to fool his blind father. Esau, the firstborn of Isaac and Rebekkah came out red (Gen 25:25) and would later be called Edom when he took the red stew from his brother in exchange for his birthright (30). Amazingly, Seir was also a land of giants (Deut 2:11-12), as all three nations show up in Deut 2.

Since Seir has just come up but now is called Edom, this means these people committed a double sin. Not only did they mock Israel’s covenant with Yahweh, they escalated the sin still more. For they “acted revengefully against the house of Judah and has grievously offended in taking vengeance on them” (Ezek 25:12b). There is something in this sin that becomes a significant reason for my opening today and why I keep talking about the allotment and the giants.

Dr. Heiser points out in his study of this passage that the word “**vengeance**” (vb: *naqam*; n: *neqamah*). This is a relatively rare word that appears in **Deut 32:43**, one of those “sons of God” passages. Reading the NAS, all you would see is that God is going to avenge “**the nations**” who have taken out vengeance on his people. And yes, that is certainly part of it, though keep in mind that Edom is also cousins with Israel and that 90% or better, this word is used for “**inter-familial antagonism ... fratricidal crime**”⁶ However, knowing that the original also included *not just nations*, but the gods of the nations, suddenly, it starts to click that there’s more going on here than meets the eye. Heiser asks rhetorically, “**Is it possible that the oracles of the nations here are written the way they are to thematically link them back to Deuteronomy 32? To say, ‘Here it begins—the judgment of the nations after Jerusalem’s fall ... I think it is!’**”⁷ Deut 32:43 says that **God will take vengeance not only on the nations, but on their gods**—those allotted to the nations earlier in the song, those whom Israel would so foolishly wander after even as the song predicts.

⁶ Michael S. Heiser, “[Naked Bible Podcast Transcript: Episode 141](#),” *Naked Bible Podcast* (Jan 14, 2017), 15.

⁷ *Ibid.*

How did Edom take vengeance upon Israel? **Ps 137:7** records, “Remember, O LORD, against the Edomites the day of Jerusalem, how they said, ‘Tear it down! Tear it down to its foundations,’” actively urging the Babylonians to raze the city completely. **Obadiah** is a prophecy against them and says they stood aloof on the day that strangers or joined as allies, entering Jerusalem’s gates, ambushing and killing fleeing brothers, carrying off Judah’s wealth, gloated and handing survivors over to Babylon for captivity or death (**Obad 11-14**). In fact, **Obadiah** also has a passage that sounds remarkably like that of the fall of Lucifer in **Isaiah 14:12-14** and the fall of the guardian cherub in **Ezekiel 28:2, 6, 9, 13-16**. “The pride of your heart has deceived you, who live in the clefts of the rock, in your lofty dwelling, who say in your heart, ‘Who will bring me down to the ground?’ Though you soar aloft like the eagle, though your nest is set among the stars, from there I will bring you down, declares the LORD” (**Obad 3-4**). This is a judgment not just of Edom, but of his treacherous gods in whom they trusted.

Thus comes the judgement in **Ezekiel**, “Therefore thus says the Lord God, I will stretch out my hand against Edom and cut off from it man and beast. And I will make it desolate; from Teman even to Dedan they shall fall by the sword.

And I will lay my vengeance upon Edom by the hand of my people Israel, and they shall do in Edom according to my anger and according to my wrath, and they shall know my vengeance, declares the Lord God” (Ezek 25:13-14).

Teman alludes to the “**south**” and was considered the beginning of the southernmost Canaanite state in the first millennium BC, but it is actually in the north of Edom. **Dedan** means “**leading forward**” and is one of the southern most cities in Edom. So the word-play here is a *merism*⁸ that from north to south, Edom will suffer God’s vengeance. Unlike the first two, however, Nebuchadnezzar does not go after Edom—perhaps he knew how well fortified Petra was! His successor, Nabonidus (556-39 BC) may have weakened or subjugated them. Josephus makes no mention and there is no record of a sudden collapse. **I’ll return to the reason why at the end.**

Oracle Against Philistia (25:15-17)

The **fourth oracle** is against **Philistia**. “Thus says the Lord God: Because the Philistines...” (Ezek 25:15a). We

⁸ Mereism is a figure of speech using extremes to include everything in between like, in America the Beautiful’s, “for amber waves of grain, for purple mountain majesties above the fruited plain ... from sea to shining sea.”

first learn about the Philistines in [the Table of Nations](#) in [Gen 10:14](#), it says they come from Casluhim, whose “brother” is Caphtorim and the sons of Ham rather than Shem. They are therefore one of the [70 nations](#) directly related to the sons of God in [Deut 32:8](#). They settled in what we today still call the [Gaza Strip](#), and the Caphtorim destroyed the Avvim giants who once lived there ([Deut 2:23](#)). The Philistines settled in the Pentapolis of Gaza, Ashkelon, Ashdod, Ekron, and Gath, the cities Israel was never able to conquer in Joshua’s day, therefore becoming a perpetual thorn in Israel’s side for centuries. The greatest example of this (and there are many) is [Goliath](#) the Philistine who later came from Gath, so they too are directly related to the giants. Their land, however, was unlike the first three, for it was in fact part of the Promised Land given by the LORD to Abram.

What sin did they commit? The Philistines “[acted revengefully and took vengeance with malice of soul to destroy in never-ending enmity](#)” ([Ezek 25:15b](#)). It’s similar to Edom, but now [malice of soul to destroy](#) in never-ending enmity is added to escalate the whole list even further. Historically speaking, [Sennacherib](#) of Assyria placed the western part of Judah under Philistine rule in 701 BC. You can

only imagine what they did with it given this indictment. Do we not still to this day [see the remnants of such violent hatred](#) between Jew and Palestinians who live in Gaza? I would never be one to say that is only a one-way street. I've been over there and I know how much the Jews despise them. I can only guess after nearly a century of ill treatment caused in part by these people being used by terrorist organizations how much those feelings are returned in kind. Truly, it is [never-ending enmity](#).

But keep in mind, these oracles are not getting Israel off the hook for anything. They've just had a dozen chapters of God's wrath directed at them. It's [only fair](#) that the Philistines get at least a couple of verses, especially with this kind of hatred for God's people in the OT. And so we read, ["Therefore thus says the Lord God, Behold, I will stretch out my hand against the Philistines, and I will cut off the Cherethites and destroy the rest of the seacoast. I will execute great vengeance on them with wrathful rebukes. Then they will know that I am the Lord, when I lay my vengeance upon them"](#) (16-17). This is [God's vengeance](#) now, not man's. He will stretch out his hand so that they may know he is the LORD. There is also [a word play](#) here on the Ker-

ethites (*krtym*) and “to cut off” (*krt*). This is deeply covenantal language that goes along with knowing that he is the LORD, for in the ANE when a covenant was confirmed they said it was “cut” (*krt*), because you would cut in two the animals of the ceremony (**Gen 15**). Now, like circumcision, or maybe even more appropriately—the Flood where all flesh was “cut off by the waters of the flood” (**Gen 9:11**), these people will be “cut off” along with the rest of the sea-coast.

Walton discusses the so-called Egyptian Wisdom of Amenemopet which states, “Do not tease a man who is in the hand of the god [i.e., mad or ill] ... for man is clay and straw, and the god is his builder. He is tearing down and building up every day.” The wisdom teachers warn that misfortune of a person or a nation is in the hands of God and ought to put the fear of God into one who witnesses it.⁹ How much more when that God is the One True God!

Now, the Philistines had already lost their independence under the Assyrians when Tiglath-pileaser III invaded in 734 BC. The kings of Gaza, Ashkelon, Ekron, and Ashdod are all mentioned in Assyrian records as faithful vassals. That’s why they got to rule over Judah. Nebuchadnezzar did not

⁹ John H. Walton, *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary (Old Testament): Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel, Daniel*, vol. 4 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2009), 458.

launch a major campaign against them though, but that could be because they were already weakened. Later, Philistia came under Persian rule, then **Alexander the Great** conquered them in 332 BC. The final nail for them was the Maccabean/Hasmonean conquest under Jonathan Maccabee (**1Mac 5:68**), Alexander Balas who burned Ashdod (**10:83-89**), and Demetrius II who destroyed Gaza (**11:4**). Josephus tells us that Alexander Jannaeus, a Hasmonean king in 100BC conquered Gaza and completely destroyed it. By the first century BC, **the Philistines as a people and culture were gone**, assimilated, destroyed, or scattered.

Oracle Against Tyre (26:1-6)

The “**rest of the sea-coast**” now gives us **a full circle**—literally—of peoples surrounding Israel on all sides but the north, and so that takes us into ch. 26 with the **culmination of Tyre** at the north. This is the first oracle with a date, “**In the eleventh year, on the first day of the month, the word of the LORD came to me**” (**Ezek 26:1**). Of the seven oracles with dates, this is actually **the fourth** in chronology, taking place in Feb/Mar, 586, or just three months before Jerusalem falls to Babylon. “**Son of man, because Tyre.**” We’ll have a

lot more to say about Tyre in coming weeks, but for today, it is simply the greatest trade sea-port of the Eastern Mediterranean and one of the most powerful and wealthy city-states of the ancient world. It was famous for its purple dye, skilled craftsmanship in metalwork and shipbuilding, and vast trade network stretching across the soon to be Roman Empire and beyond.

So what did Tyre do? They “said concerning Jerusalem, ‘Aha, the gate of the peoples is broken; it has swung open to me. I shall be replenished, now that she is laid waste’” (Ezek 26:1b). This also takes us full circle back to Ammon also saying, “Aha.” They gloated. But their sin was completely self-absorbed and narcissistic, for their gloating was done in relation to their own glory. Now that Judah is gone, I can be replenished. Zimmerli explains how this all comes round. “The oracle against the Ammonites contained only the expression of mockery at the fall of Jerusalem, which was made stronger in the words of the Moabites by a thrust at Judah’s awareness of her election, 26:2 accentuates the mockery (“Aha!” as in 25:3) from the point of view of the rich trading

city of Tyre: the rich possessions of Jerusalem will now accrue to Tyre.”¹⁰ Basically, Judah’s destruction created a massive economic and geopolitical opportunity for Tyre. With Jerusalem’s gates wide open and no one left trading there, a major commercial hub was now gone. They saw the advantage and tried to take it.

So what is the judgment? “Therefore thus says the Lord God: Behold, I am against you, O Tyre, and will bring up many nations against you, as the sea brings up its waves. They shall destroy the walls of Tyre and break down her towers, and I will scrape her soil from her and make her a bare rock. She shall be in the midst of the sea a place for the spreading of nets, for I have spoken, declares the Lord God. And she shall become plunder for the nations, and her daughters on the mainland shall be killed by the sword. Then they will know that I am the Lord” (3-6).

This prophecy is fulfilled, like several of the others, in stages. Nebuchadnezzar besieged mainland Tyre for 13 years! Imagine it. He destroyed the coastal city, broke its walls, and killed or deported many inhabitants, but the island fortress held out. The decisive blow came 200 years

¹⁰ Walther Zimmerli, Frank Moore Cross, and Klaus Baltzer, *Ezekiel: A Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Ezekiel*, Hermeneia—a Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979–), 34.

later when **Alexander** besieged the island city, building a massive causeway across the sea made of the stones and debris from the mainland ruins to literally fulfill, “**They will throw your stones and timber and rubble into the water.**” After seven months, he captured the island, massacred thousands, crucified 2,000, and sold 30,000 into slavery. The city was razed, and the causeway turned the island into a peninsula. Tyre became a “bare rock” and a place for nets. It all started because Alexander wanted to go and offer a sacrifice to Heracles in the city, but they wouldn’t let him enter (**Arrian**, *Anabasis of Alexander* 2.16–24).

Four and One of Seven

Basically, what we see then is that **four of the seven** oracles find their fulfillments in the immediate to near future. They learned, like those in the flood, that if God says he will cut you off, that he will **cut you off**. There’s an American folk/gospel song recorded as early as the Golden Gate Jubilee Quartet in 1938. Johnny Cash made famous in one of his last recordings, released posthumously after his death in 2003.¹¹

¹¹ **Johnny Cash**, “God’s Gonna Cut You Down,” *American V: A Hundred Highways*, American Recordings (2006).

It basically tells the story,

*You can run on for a long time
Run on for a long time
Run on for a long time
Sooner or later God'll cut you down
Sooner or later God'll cut you down
Go tell that long tongue liar
Go and tell that midnight rider
Tell the rambler, the gambler, the back biter
Tell 'em that God's gonna cut 'em down
Tell 'em that God's gonna cut 'em down*

But the reason I bring this song up here at the end is because of the great turn of the song that happens in the next verse:

*Well my goodness gracious let me tell you the news
My head's been wet with the midnight dew
I've been down on bended knee
Talkin' to the man from Galilee
... He spoke to me in the voice so sweet
I thought I heard the shuffle of the angel's feet
He called my name and my heart stood still
When he said, "John, go do my will!"*

Now, John goes on to sing about more judgment to come, but this verse gives a hint that **there is good news**, that if you **heed the call** of the gracious news and repent, that you too can know the voice so sweet of the man from Galilee. For as Johnny learned later in life, **Jesus saves sinners** and—the same Jesus who spoke these words to Ezekiel about judgment—also saves the nations.

But why these nations and not others? A couple reasons come to mind. First, they literally surround Israel on every side. So it's a great way of saying that God knows all you've gone through. Second, as Heiser says, these are the nations closely associated with the giants of old. Therefore, there is divine council implications going on here.¹² And that takes me back to the beginning of this sermon.

Let's return to **Edom**, for we saw that in this middle oracle, they were the one that didn't really see a fulfillment. So what about Edom? In his commentary, John Taylor tells us a little more about this. First, he begins by reminding us that **Israel is to be the agent for God's vengeance (Ezek 25:14)**. **"By the hand of my people Israel."** This fits because Edom's sin is the most fratricidal. Esau's descendants betrayed their "brother." Also, the two on either side are judged directly

¹² Heiser, 14.

by God or generic agents. This makes Edom a distinct “middle.” So did this work its way out in history?

Kind of. Taylor writes, “It is interesting to note that although Edom proper was also overrun by Nabateans, the ancestors of the modern Arabs, Edomite survivors were later subdued first by Judas Maccabaeus and then by John Hyrcanus, who incorporated them into the Jewish race by compulsory circumcision. Ezekiel, however, does not predict that they will ever ‘know that I am the Lord’.”¹³ This is how you end up getting someone like Herod the Great, for example, who was both an installed king via Rome and in Idumean, i.e. Edomite. He was not the rightful king of the Jews, but was at best a steward—and an evil one at that.

But though the Edomites also get lost to time—mostly because they had already been forced to become Jews through circumcision and then the events of 70-135 AD and the various revolts that led to Israel’s own scattering, such that by the 2nd-3rd centuries no one identifies themselves as Edomites any longer, I believe that this forcing Edom to become Jews at the hands of Israel itself is actually a type—albeit one done in the opposite way, of the truest fulfillment of Edom’s oracle.

¹³ John B. Taylor, *Ezekiel: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 22, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1969), 185.

This all goes back to that idea of vengeance and how it so directly ties us to those “sons of God” passages, especially in Deut 32, and especially **vs. 43** where God *takes his vengeance* upon the nations who went after Israel. As we have seen, all of these nations are ultimately judged in this chapter for how they treated God’s people. It was a grievous sin to mock their covenant and despise their elect status, because doing so is a mocking of God himself.

But that verse, strangely, *tells the nations ... to rejoice*. And in the original, the part the Rabbis took out of their text, the part that **Hebrews 1:6** directly quotes, the sons of God or *angels of the nations* are *explicitly commanded to worship Yahweh*, and Hebrews through divine inspiration applies this directly to Jesus, because Jesus is Yahweh (or Second Yahweh, Second God, *Deuteros Theos* as Philo called him). In the song, *God the Father is the Most High* (El Elyon, **Deut 32:7**). He gives his sons the nations as an inheritance. But *Yahweh (the Son in this case)* inherits Israel. Later, the Son will inherit all the nations (**Ps 2:8, 82:8**) and I think this is implicit even in **Deut 32:43** where the sons of God and nations are commanded to worship him. It’s the same thing **Psalm 97:7** says, “*Worship him, all you gods.*” And **Psalm 22:27** mirrors this on earth, “*All the ends of the earth shall*

remember and turn to the LORD, and all the families of the nations shall worship before you.”

But how can this happen if the end of the nations is *only judgment* and doom and the total erasure of even their name from the earth? No, **Deut 32:43** is commanding shared *worship* and *celebration* in Yahweh’s victory over the adversaries. The nations are no longer standing apart under their separate *elohim*; **they are all called to join with Israel in praising Jesus!**

In this light, remember also that idea of cutting off, and how it has covenant implications, both negative (in the Flood) *and positive* (in circumcision), which we’ve see attached to Edom in this history and to Ammon, Edom, and Philistia and in our text. In fact, Kerethites means “**Cut Off Ones.**” In other words, the idea of cutting off has both judgmental and *salvation* overtones.

It seems to me that in the cutting off, that, as in both the flood and in circumcision, the **bad is let go** and it **makes room for the remnant**. For not all were cut off in the flood, but eight were saved—God’s remnant. In the same way, as Heiser notes both in his discussion of this and in his *Unseen Realm*, the nations are cut off from their old gods, their old identities, their rebellion at Babel. Through Christ, they are brought under Yahweh’s rule—**not erased, but redeemed.**

The Philistines, Edom, all the disinherited nations—their final conquest is when they become part of the new covenant people. “There is neither Jew nor Greek ... for you are all one in Christ Jesus” (**Galatians 3:28**). The sword of judgment becomes **the sword of the Spirit**—cutting away the old life so the new can grow.

The rabbinical changes to **Deut 32:43**—removing the command for “all the sons of God/angels” to worship Yahweh and altering “the blood of his sons” to “his servants”—**obscure the cosmic scope of God’s vengeance**. By erasing the divine council’s worship and the avenging of “his sons” (Israel), the text no longer clearly shows that Yahweh’s judgment on the nations is the prelude to their **ultimate reclamation**. The original reading reveals the endgame: after vengeance cuts off the rebellious gods and their earthly proxies, the nations are invited to rejoice with God’s people and bow before the true YHWH. Without this, we miss that the oracles in Ezekiel 25–32 are not just about destruction—they’re the opening act in the gospel’s conquest of the disinherited nations through Christ. Messiah crushes the head of Moab ultimately by defeating its evil gods and saving the remnant out of it.

That's **the kernel of the gospel** announced to Five of Seven. Their assimilation will not finally be total loss of self to the Babylonian or Greek or Roman tyrants. It will be in finding the fullness of self-individualization as each convert is made a new creature and brought into union with Christ and his kingdom. There is hope here, even in the words of our passage, let alone the broader context of the nations being saved by God—an idea that goes all the way back to Abraham's name: The Father of Many Nations. He *called my name and my heart stood still* When he said, "John, go do my will!"

Edom's betrayal and survival thus serves a bigger purpose—the nations must be judged, but their final conquest is through the gospel, not just the sword. Jesus is the one who inherits *the nations*, not empty deserted war-torn ghost lands, but lands full of the children of Adam. This solution began in Acts 2 at the hands of God's own people—the Jews who have converted to follow Jesus! Obadiah, whose oracle is against Edom, ends with “**Saviors shall go up to Mount Zion to rule Mount Esau, and the kingdom shall be the LORD's**” (**Obad 21**). That's the gospel, the Great Commission. The conquest of Edom is the conquest of the nations through the gospel.

That is how we should all [pray for our enemies](#). Not gloating over their destruction. Not in denying God’s sovereign history over the Jews or the nations in the Old Testament. Not in seeking active revenge. Not in perpetual, deep-seated enmity. Not in cynical, opportunistic profiteering. Not so that they would only finally know the Lord in vengeance. But that they might come to know the Lord through his grace as they turn from their sins and embrace the kingdom of God.

Let us all pray to that end.

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