

Ezekiel 16:39

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And I will also give thee into their hand, and they shall throw down thine eminent place, and shall break down thy high places: they shall strip thee also of thy clothes, and shall take thy fair jewels, and leave thee naked and bare.

Analysis

This verse continues Ezekiel's shocking allegory of Jerusalem as an unfaithful wife facing judgment. The phrase **וְנָתַתִּי אוֹתָךְ בְּיָדָם** (venatatti otakh beyadam, 'And I will give you into their hand') shows God actively delivering Jerusalem to her enemies—not passive permission but deliberate judgment. The verb **וְהָרְסוּ** (veharsu, 'they shall throw down') means violent demolition, complete destruction. The term **גִּבְעֵיךְ** (gabeikh, 'eminent place') refers to pagan high places or shrines built for idolatrous worship—Israel's spiritual adultery made physical in architecture.

The phrase **וְנָתַצְוּ רָמֹתַיִךְ** (venittsu ramotayikh, 'and break down your high places') uses **רָמָה** (ramah), elevated worship sites explicitly forbidden by the Law. Most striking is the humiliation: **וְהִפְשִׁיטוּ אוֹתָךְ בְּגָדֶיךָ** (vehifshitu otakh begadayikh, 'they shall strip you of your clothes') and **וְלָקְחוּ כְלֵי תִפְאַרְתְּךָ** (velaqchu khelei tif'arteikh, 'take your beautiful jewels'). The final image **וְהִנִּיחוּךְ עֵירִם וְסָרְיָה** (vehinichuakh eirom ve'eryah, 'and leave you naked and bare') represents total shame and vulnerability—the opposite of God's initial clothing of her (16:10). The double expression for nakedness intensifies the disgrace.

Historical Context

Ezekiel 16 is one of Scripture's most extended and graphic allegories, comparing Jerusalem to an abandoned infant whom God rescued, raised, beautified, and married—who then became a prostitute with many lovers (representing political alliances and idolatry). This prophecy dates to around 593-571 BC, during the Babylonian exile. The 'lovers' who would strip and destroy Jerusalem include Babylon and other nations God would use as judgment instruments. The reference to 'eminent places' and 'high places' describes the actual shrines and altars Jerusalem built for Baal, Asherah, Molech, and other deities. Archaeological evidence confirms these high places throughout Israel and Judah. The stripping imagery reflects ancient Near Eastern practice where defeated cities were plundered and humiliated. This judgment was fulfilled in 586 BC when Babylon destroyed Jerusalem, burned the temple, and carried survivors to exile.

Related Passages

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Study Questions

1. How does the allegory of unfaithful marriage help us understand Israel's idolatry?
2. What does it mean that God Himself gives Jerusalem to her enemies—how is this justice?
3. How do the 'eminent places' and 'high places' represent Israel's spiritual adultery?
4. What is the significance of stripping away the clothes and jewels God had given?

5. How should this severe judgment inform our understanding of God's holiness and covenant faithfulness?

Interlinear Text

וְנָתַתִּי י	אוֹתָךְ הַ	בְּיָדָם	וְהָרָסוּ וְ	
And I will also give	H853	thee into their hand	and they shall throw down	
H5414		H3027	H2040	
גִּבְרָךְ	וְנָתַצוּ וְ	כְּמֹתַי הַ	וְהִפְשׁוּ יָטוּ	אוֹתָךְ
thine eminent place	and shall break down	thy high places	they shall strip	H853
H1354	H5422	H7413	H6584	
בְּגָדֶיךָ	וְלָקְחוּ וְ	כָּל־יְ	תִפְאַרְתְּךָ הַ	וְהֵנִיחַ וְ
thee also of thy clothes	and shall take	jewels	thy fair	and leave
H899	H3947	H3627	H8597	H3240
עֵירָם	וְעָרְיָהּ:			
thee naked	and bare			
H5903	H6181			

Additional Cross-References

Ezekiel 23:26 (Parallel theme): They shall also strip thee out of thy clothes, and take away thy fair jewels.

Hosea 2:3 (Parallel theme): Lest I strip her naked, and set her as in the day that she was born, and make her as a wilderness, and set her like a dry land, and slay her with thirst.