

Ezekiel 16:41

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And they shall burn thine houses with fire, and execute judgments upon thee in the sight of many women: and I will cause thee to cease from playing the harlot, and thou also shalt give no hire any more.

Analysis

And they shall burn thine houses with fire, and execute judgments upon thee in the sight of many women: and I will cause thee to cease from playing the harlot, and thou also shalt give no hire any more. "Burn thine houses with fire" describes the total destruction of Jerusalem—residential areas, palaces, and the temple itself (2 Kings 25:9, Jeremiah 52:13). Fire symbolizes complete purging and irreversible judgment. The phrase **"execute judgments upon thee"** (asah shefatim, עָשָׂה שְׁפָטִים) means carrying out legal verdicts—Babylon functioned as God's agent of justice.

"In the sight of many women" refers to surrounding nations witnessing Jerusalem's punishment—the public humiliation completing her shame. In ancient Near Eastern culture, conquered cities were personified as women; neighboring nations would observe Jerusalem's fate as warning. "I will cause thee to cease from playing the harlot" promises the end of idolatry—judgment would purge the seductive sin. **"Thou also shalt give no hire any more"** means the end of tribute payments and political prostitution—exile would eliminate Jerusalem's capacity for foreign alliances.

This verse reveals judgment's redemptive purpose: **to end the sin destroying Israel.** The exile achieved what prophetic warnings couldn't—permanent cure of idolatry. Post-exilic Judaism never returned to pagan worship. Suffering

accomplished what preaching alone couldn't. Hebrews 12:5-11 teaches that divine discipline, though painful, produces righteousness in those trained by it.

Historical Context

In 586 BC, Nebuzaradan burned Jerusalem's temple, palace, and houses (2 Kings 25:8-9). The city remained desolate for 70 years (Jeremiah 25:11-12, Daniel 9:2), eliminating both idolatrous infrastructure and political autonomy. Surrounding nations—Edom, Moab, Ammon, Tyre, Egypt—witnessed Judah's catastrophic fall (Ezekiel 25-32, Obadiah).

The exile transformed Judaism. Cut off from temple worship, Jews developed synagogue study of Torah. Separation from idolatrous neighbors purged syncretism. Prophetic literature was compiled, establishing Scripture's authority. When the remnant returned (538 BC onward), they rebuilt the temple but never restored monarchy or resumed idolatry. The Second Temple period, despite challenges, maintained monotheistic worship until Messiah's arrival. Judgment successfully achieved its purgative purpose—idolatry ceased.

Related Passages

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Study Questions

1. How has God used severe discipline in your life to purge persistent sin that resisted gentler correction?
2. What 'houses' or structures in your life might need burning to eliminate entrenched idolatrous patterns?

Interlinear Text

וְשָׂרְפוּ And they shall burn H8313	בְּתֵי יְרוּ thine houses H1004	בְּאֵשׁ with fire H784	וְעָשׂוּ and execute H6213	בְּ H0	שְׁפָטִים יִמְ judgments H8201
לְעֵינַי י upon thee in the sight H5869	נָשִׁים יִמְ women H802	רַב וְזֹת of many H7227	וְהִשְׁבַּתִּיךָ and I will cause thee to cease H7673		
מִזְנוֹן הָ from playing the harlot H2181	וְגַם H1571	אֶתְנֶן לֹ no hire H868	לֹ H3808	תִּתְּנִי and thou also shalt give H5414	עוֹד: H5750

Additional Cross-References

Ezekiel 23:48 (Parallel theme): Thus will I cause lewdness to cease out of the land, that all women may be taught not to do after your lewdness.

Jeremiah 39:8 (Parallel theme): And the Chaldeans burned the king's house, and the houses of the people, with fire, and brake down the walls of Jerusalem.

Jeremiah 52:13 (Parallel theme): And burned the house of the LORD, and the king's house; and all the houses of Jerusalem, and all the houses of the great men, burned he with fire:

Ezekiel 23:27 (Parallel theme): Thus will I make thy lewdness to cease from thee, and thy whoredom brought from the land of Egypt: so that thou shalt not lift up thine eyes unto them, nor remember Egypt any more.

2 Kings 25:9 (Parallel theme): And he burnt the house of the LORD, and the king's house, and all the houses of Jerusalem, and every great man's house burnt he with fire.

Deuteronomy 13:16 (Parallel theme): And thou shalt gather all the spoil of it into the midst of the street thereof, and shalt burn with fire the city, and all the spoil thereof every whit, for the LORD thy God: and it shall be an heap for ever; it shall not be built again.

Ezekiel 5:8 (Judgment): Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I, even I, am against thee, and will execute judgments in the midst of thee in the sight of the nations.

Ezekiel 23:10 (Judgment): These discovered her nakedness: they took her sons and her daughters, and slew her with the sword: and she became famous among women; for they had executed judgment upon her.

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