

**Reworking Future History****Ezekiel 20:32–44**

Veritas Adult Community

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**The Text****Preamble (vv. 1–4)****Israel's Rebellion in the Distant Past (vv. 5–26)**

- Phase I: Israel's Rebellion in Egypt (vv. 5–9)
- Phase II: Israel's Rebellion in the Desert—the First Generation: (vv. 10–17)
- Phase III: Israel's Rebellion in the Desert—the Second Generation: (vv. 18–26)

**Israel's Rebellion in the Recent Past (vv. 27–31)**

- Phase IV: Israel's Rebellion in the Land (vv. 27–29)
- Phase V: Israel's Rebellion in Exile (vv. 30–31)

**Israel's Prospects for the Future (vv. 32–44)**

- Phase VI: Israel in the Desert of the Peoples (vv. 32–38)
- Phase VII: Israel on YHWH's Holy Mountain (vv. 39–44)

**Israel's Future Transformation (vv. 32–44)****Phase VI: Israel's Transformation in the Desert of the Peoples (vv. 32–38)**

<sup>32</sup> The notion that has arisen in your mind will never happen—that is, what you are thinking, “Let’s be like the nations, like the clans of other countries, serving wood and stone.”

<sup>33</sup> As I live—the declaration of the Lord YHWH—Surely with a strong hand, and with outstretched arm, and with outpoured fury, I will reign over you as king. <sup>34</sup> I will take you out from the peoples and gather you from the countries to which you have been scattered, with a strong hand, and with outstretched arm, and with outpoured fury. <sup>35</sup> Then I will bring you into the desert of the peoples, and enter into judgment with you there, face to face. <sup>36</sup> As I entered into judgment with your ancestors, in the desert of the country of Egypt, so I will enter into judgment with you—the declaration of the Lord YHWH. <sup>37</sup> I will make you pass under the staff and impose on you covenantal obligation. <sup>38</sup> I will purge you of the rebels and those who rise in revolt against me. I will take them out of the country where they live as aliens, but they will not come to the land of Israel. Then you will know that I am YHWH.

**Phase VII: Israel's Transformation on YHWH's Holy Mountain (vv. 39–44)**

<sup>39</sup> As for you, O house of Israel, thus has the Lord YHWH declared: Every one of you, go ahead, serve your dung pellets! But afterwards, if you refuse to listen to me . . . ! But my holy name you will not desecrate with your gifts and with your dung pellets any more. <sup>40</sup> On the contrary, on my holy mountain, the high mountain of Israel—the declaration of the Lord YHWH—there the whole house of Israel, all of them, will serve me, in the homeland. There I will accept them, and there I will request your contributions, and your choice gifts, all your holy gifts. <sup>41</sup> As a soothing aroma I will accept you, when I take you out from the peoples, and gather you from the countries, in which you have been scattered. And I will manifest my holiness through you in the sight of the nations. <sup>42</sup> Then you will know that I am YHWH, when I bring you to the land of Israel, to the land that I swore to give to your ancestors. <sup>43</sup> There you will remember your ways, and all your provocative deeds, with which you have defiled yourselves. And you will look upon yourself with utter disgust, because of

all your evil actions that you have committed. <sup>44</sup> And you will know that I am YHWH, when I have dealt with you for the honor of my name, rather than according to your wicked conduct, or your corrupt and provocative actions, O house of Israel. The declaration of the Lord YHWH.

#### **Phase VI: Israel in the Desert of the Peoples (vv. 32–38)**

1. **The Nature of Israel's Rebellion (v. 32)**
2. YHWH's Response to Israel's Rebellion (vv. 33–38)
  - a. YHWH will bring about a new exodus (v. 34).
  - b. YHWH will lead his people out into the desert (v. 35).
  - c. YHWH will establish his covenant with his people (vv. 35b–37).
  - d. YHWH will purge the rebels from His people (v. 38).

#### **Phase VII: Israel on YHWH's Holy Mountain (vv. 39–44)**

##### **1. The Transformation of Israel (vv. 39–40a)**

Israel's desecration of YHWH's holy name with her gifts and filthy idols will give way to true obedience and respect for YHWH's holy name.

##### **2. YHWH's Acceptance of Israel (vv. 40b–42)**

##### **3. Israel's Response to YHWH's Action (vv. 43–44)**

- a. First, instead of YHWH's present refusal to receive the inquiry of the exiles he will request the people's offerings.
- b. Instead of Israel's past defilement through their idolatrous practices (vv. 7, 18), their offerings, and "the first/choice gift lifted up" will be accepted as holy.
- c. Instead of provoking YHWH with their pagan rites, including their "soothing aromas" (v. 28), YHWH will accept the people themselves as a "soothing aroma."
- d. Instead of defending the honor of his name before the nations through restraint, viz., by not destroying his people, YHWH will vindicate his holiness.
- e. Instead of living in Egypt (cf. v. 5–9), the desert (cf. vv. 10–26; 35–38), or the diaspora (vv. 30–34), Israel will finally be in own land, in fulfillment of YHWH's ancient promises to the ancestors (v. 42).

##### **3. Israel's Response to YHWH's Action (vv. 43–44)**

- a. Israel will remember her corrupt past.
- b. The memory of this sordid past will evoke in YHWH's people an intense self-loathing.
- c. Israel will recognize that YHWH is faithful to his covenant oaths (v. 42), that his actions involving them are motivated by a concern for his own honor, and that they run contrary to what they deserve.

#### **Theological and Practical Implications**

1. God often interprets history quite differently from the way humans do.
2. The primary motivation behind divine activity is revelatory—that all may know who YHWH is.
3. The divine reputation depends upon the fate and welfare of his people.
4. The experience of divine mercy drives true covenant people to their knees.