

## The Fall of Bavel Yesha'yahu 47:1-15

In my last post, we learned of the **Gods of Bavel** in **Yesha'yahu 46:1-13**. In this post, we examine **The Fall of Bavel** in **Yesha'yahu 47:1-15**.

**Yesha'yahu 47** deals with the destruction of **Bavel** which, at this time, was a power just coming into prominence. Approximately 150 years after this prophecy was penned, **Bavel** would fall by the hand of **Koresh**, leader of the **Medes and Persians**.

***<sup>1</sup> "Come down, and sit in the dust, you virgin daughter of Bavel! Sit on the ground, not on a throne, daughter of the Kasdim! No longer are you to be called dainty and delicate.***

The biblical writers often depicted cities as feminine in nature. The term *virgin daughter* was addressed to a community that faced disaster. In the ancient Near East, no one was considered a more helpless victim of war than the unmarried girl. Defeat often meant the loss of an intended husband as well as the loss of virginity at the hands of the marauding victors. <sup>1</sup>

To sit in the dust, just like sitting on the ground, was a sign of subservience and humiliation. **Bavel**, the mighty nation that achieved special status among the other countries of the world (pampered and spoiled), will be put in a position of shame. Up to this point in **Yesha'yahu**, only **Adonai's** people have been called daughter by **Adonai**.

***<sup>2</sup> Take the millstones, and grind meal; take off your veil, strip off your skirt, uncover your legs, wade through the streams.***

Grinding *meal* (grain) at the flour mill was one of the most menial of tasks, often done by slave girls in both Egypt and Mesopotamia. In most ancient Near Eastern cultures, a married woman was partially veiled in public, and this was the mark of her marital status. Slaves or concubines could not afford to veil, and in any case, they did not have the legal right to be veiled. Bridges were virtually nonexistent in the ancient world, so streams and rivers were waded across at fords. A slave had to cross a stream on foot, in contrast to a rich person who was carried over in a carriage or a chair carried by servants. <sup>2</sup>

***<sup>3</sup> Your private parts will be exposed; yes, your shame will be seen. I am going to take vengeance, and no one will stand in My way."***

**Bavel**, personified as a young woman, will do her lowly chores - in contrast to her former exalted status - and then will strip to cross a stream. As she does so, her *shame* will be exposed. How humiliating! **Adonai** says she will indeed be defeated and humiliated.

***<sup>4</sup> Our Redeemer! Adonai-Tzva'ot is his name, the Holy One of Isra'el! <sup>5</sup> "Sit there speechless, go into darkness, you daughter of the Kasdim! For you will no longer be called the mistress of kingdoms.***

***Daughter of the Kasdim*** (Chaldeans) is a reference to the personified city of **Bavel**. **Bavel** had achieved dominance among the nations of the world, but its former glory will be turned to oblivion.

***<sup>6</sup> I was angry with My people, I desecrated My own possession and gave them over to you. But you showed them no mercy; you made your yoke very heavy, even upon the aged. <sup>7</sup> You said, 'I will be mistress forever' so you didn't consider these things or think about the consequences.***

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<sup>1</sup> The IVP Bible Background Commentary – Old Testament.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

**Adonai** has used **Bavel** as the tool of His anger against **Y'hudah**. **Bavel's yoke** is an image of their political domination over **Y'hudah**. Because of her continued practice of idolatry, **Y'hudah** was carried into captivity for seventy years by the **Bavlim**. The **Bavlim** showed no mercy, even to the elderly. But **Bavel** overplayed its hand and sought its glory, not realizing that its pride would lead to retribution.

I think this lesson is an essential Word for us. The sorry tendency of humanity is to ask that mercy be shown to ourselves but judgment shown to others. Why? Because the sins of others always look so much worse than our sins. After all, we know the reason, the background, the excuses for our sin - but think no one else has any right to sin. Never overplay your hand.

***<sup>8</sup> Now hear this, you lover of luxuries, lolling at ease and saying to yourself, 'I am important, and no one else! I will never be a widow or know the loss of children.'***

The use of **I am** would have immediately struck a chord for this Israeli audience. There was no claim too arrogant for these kings to make for themselves. Only the one true God can claim **I am**!

***<sup>9</sup> But both will come over you in an instant, in a single day loss of children and widowhood; they will utterly overwhelm you, despite your many occult practices and powerful spells to prevent it."***

As so many kingdoms before and after her, **Bavel** thought herself invincible. In a single night, she fell to the invasion of **Koresh** and was thus rendered both widowed and childless due to loss of king and loss of life.

***<sup>10</sup> You were at ease in your wickedness, you thought, "No one sees me." Your "wisdom" and "knowledge" perverted you, as you thought to yourself, "I am important, and no one else." <sup>11</sup> Disaster will befall you, and you won't know how to charm it away; calamity will come upon you, and you won't be able to turn it aside; ruin will overcome you, suddenly, before you know it.***

The **Bavlim** thought they were on top of every situation, that no one saw them. The atheist still holds this view. Atheists claim not to see **Adonai** - but the reason is that they don't find **Adonai** any more than a thief finds a police officer.

***<sup>12</sup> So for now, keep on with your powerful spells and your many occult practices; from childhood, you have been working at them; maybe they will do you some good, maybe you will inspire terror! <sup>13</sup> You are worn out with all your consultations - so let the astrologers and stargazers, the monthly horoscope-makers, come forward now and save you from the things that will come upon you!***

**Bavlim** culture was known for its infatuation with sorceries and spells, which represented a way to manipulate the gods. In particular, **Bavel** was known for attempts to determine the future by consulting the stars. Indeed, even after **Bavel** disappeared as an empire, the term **Kasdim** was used to designate astrologers.

Idols, crystals, tarot cards, and astrology will all be worthless in the day of judgment.

***<sup>14</sup> Look, they will be like straw! The fire will consume them. They will not save even themselves from the power of the flame. It will not be coals for warming oneself, not a fire to sit beside!***

***<sup>15</sup> So much for your [wizards], with whom you have worked all your life! Each will wander off in his own direction, and nobody will save you. ~ Isaiah 47:1-15 (CJB)***

The fortune-tellers and wizards who had freely plied their trade in **Bavel** would flee at her fall.

In my next post, we examine **Stubborn Isra'el** in **Yesha'yahu 48:1-11**.