

# THE WOMAN IN THE EPDAH

Another Picture of the Harlot in Rev. 17:1-19:6

By Arlen L. Chirwood

**Then the angel that talked with me went forth, and said unto me, Lift up now thine eyes, and see what is this that goeth forth.**

**And I said, What is it? And he said, This is an ephah that goeth forth. He said moreover, This is their resemblance through all the earth.**

**And, behold, there was lifted up a talent of lead: and this is a woman that sitteth in the midst of the ephah.**

**And he said, This is wickedness. And he cast it into the midst of the ephah; and he cast the weight of lead upon the mouth thereof.**

**Then lifted I up mine eyes, and looked, and, behold, there came out two women, and the wind was in their wings; for they had wings like the wings of a stork: and they lifted up the ephah between the earth and the heaven.**

**Then said I to the angel that talked with me, Whither do these bear the ephah?**

**And he said unto me, To build it an house in the land of Shinar: and it shall be established, and set there upon her own base (Zech. 5:5-11).**

The Lord uses eight visions to introduce the Book of Zechariah, and the visions themselves are introduced by His statement surrounding *Israel's* past disobedience, the result of this disobedience, the call for repentance, and that which will result following *Israel's* repentance (1:1-6).

These visions have to be understood *in the light of the manner in which they are introduced*. And, understood contextually, these visions *must be looked upon as having to do with Israel and the nations during and at the end of the Times of the Gentiles*.

There are numerous metaphors throughout these visions, and the vision of the woman in the ephah is no different. Metaphors are used for practically everything in this vision, including “an house in the land of Shinar.”

However, metaphors, as used in these visions, or elsewhere in Scripture, do not lend themselves to fanciful interpretation. Scripture uses metaphors after a consistent fashion (e.g., “a mountain” always has to do with *a kingdom*, “the sea” always has to do with *the Gentiles or the place of death*, “a fig tree” always has to do with *Israel or showing a connection with Israel*, etc.). Metaphors found anywhere in Scripture are to be understood and explained contextually and/or through comparing Scripture with Scripture, in accordance with how Scripture deals with the metaphors being used.

For example, *three women* are in view in this vision — *one* in the ephah, and *two* who transport the ephah (with a woman inside). Since the manner in which the visions are introduced at the beginning of Zechariah has to do with *Israel and the nations*, ascertaining who these three women represent is quite simple, for “a woman” is sometimes used in Scripture, in a metaphorical way, to represent a nation (Isa. 47:1-7; 62:1-5; Rev. 12:1; 17:3ff).

Remaining with *the subject matter of the visions and the metaphorical use of women elsewhere in Scripture*, the “woman” in the ephah can only represent *Israel*, with the “two women” who transport the ephah representing *Gentile nations*. The woman in the ephah is removed from one land and transported to another.

And though the matter has its roots in history, where exactly the same thing occurred, the vision must be understood relative to *the end times*, for the destruction of Gentile world power follows in the next and last vision.

That is to say, the same thing occurred through the Assyrian and Babylonian captivities, bringing about the Times of the Gentiles following the Babylonian captivity; and the same thing will occur yet future, bringing a close to the Times of the Gentiles.

During the end times, the Babylonian kingdom of the man of sin will encompass all the Gentile nations; and “the land of Shinar,” used in a metaphorical sense (in keeping with all the other metaphors used in the vision), would refer, not to one tract of land in the Mesopotamian Valley but to *the origin (the land of Shinar)* of a Babylonian kingdom which will then exist worldwide.

Thus, since the woman is moved to “the land of Shinar,” the only place *from* which the woman could possibly be moved would be *the land of Israel*, for any other part of the earth would be within the scope of the metaphorical use of “the land of Shinar” at this future time.

As previously stated, this occurred in history when the Jews were transported to the actual land of Shinar by the first king of Babylon (the first king as seen in Daniel’s image), and this will occur yet future, once again, when the Jewish people are uprooted from their land and scattered throughout a Babylonian kingdom which will then exist worldwide (though evidently with a Middle Eastern capital). This disbursement of the Jewish people throughout the Gentile world, both past and future, is exactly what is seen in Rev. 17:1, 15 — the woman, referred to as “the great whore” both here and in numerous Old Testament passages, seated in the midst of the nations, scattered throughout Antichrist’s kingdom (cf. Isa. 1:21-24; Jer. 3:1-14; Ezek. 16:26-39; Hosea 2:1ff).

The woman in the ephah is described by the word “wickedness [or, ‘unrighteousness’]” (v. 8), which would be in perfect keeping with her harlotry *as she courts lovers among the nations, particularly as she continues to court the Gentile nations in the final form of the kingdom of Babylon*.

The “ephah” was the largest measure for dry goods used by the Jews, though of Egyptian ori-

gin. And the “ephah,” when used in a symbolic sense, would invariably be thought of as referring to *trade or commerce*. This was simply the manner in which the “ephah” was used, allowing it to be a natural emblem for *merchandising*.

The woman seated in the midst of the ephah, in this respect, would point to one characteristic of the Jewish people after being removed from their land — transformed from a nation primarily involved in *agriculture* to a nation primarily involved in *merchandising*. Note that *merchandising* is a main realm in which the woman is seen involved throughout a large section of Revelation chapter eighteen (vv. 3, 9-23).

The vision of the woman seated in the midst of the ephah though could refer to something else as well. As previously pointed out, the “ephah” was the largest of the measures used by the Jews for dry goods, though of Egyptian origin. “Egypt” is used in Scripture to typify or symbolize *the world outside the land of Israel, the Gentile nations*. And, in this respect, the woman seated in the midst of the ephah could very well also call attention to *the full measure of Israel’s sin of harlotry, as she finds herself seated in the midst of the Gentile nations (seated in the largest of measures, one of Gentile origin) in the kingdom of Antichrist*.

The woman in the vision sought to escape from the ephah (*ref. v. 8, NASB, NIV*), probably realizing the fate about to befall her should she remain in the ephah. But she was prevented from escaping, and she was cast back into the ephah and kept inside by a lead covering placed over the top, weighing a talent. The woman was to realize *her own inevitable fate, in the midst of the ephah in the land of Shinar, i.e., in the midst of commercialism, among the nations, in the kingdom of Antichrist*.

*This is where the harlot would be destroyed, as seen in Revelation chapters seventeen through the first part of nineteen.*

A talent of lead placed over the opening of the ephah kept the woman inside. A “talent” was *the largest weight used among the Jewish people, and “lead” was one of the heaviest of metals*. Such a covering

showed that *there was no escape from that which must occur, for her sins had “reached unto heaven,” and God had “remembered her iniquities”* (Rev. 18:5).

The heaviest of weights (a talent of lead) was placed over the opening of the largest of measures (the ephah) to keep the woman (Israel) inside the ephah, *for a purpose* — to be transported from her land to a place among the nations.

Two women (which could only represent other nations, Gentile nations), with stork-like wings (the stork, an unclean bird [Lev. 11:13, 19; Deut. 14:12, 18]), lifted the ephah up from the land of Israel and transported it out among the nations (to that foreshadowed by the land of Shinar in that coming day).

*And there, among her Gentile lovers, the woman, Israel, was to be established and dealt with by God in relation to the magnitude of her sin, with a view to repentance.*

(The vision of the ephah could only span the centuries of time covering the entire Times of the Gentiles [some twenty-six centuries] as seen in Daniel’s great image or the four great beasts, though with a particular emphasis upon *the latter days*.)

With Israel and the magnitude of her sin over centuries of time in view, note again the laws of the harvest relative to sowing and reaping.

Note, according to Zechariah’s vision of the woman in the ephah, that which must ultimately occur relative to the remnant of Jews presently in the land of Israel — approximately 6,000,000 today. It is exactly the same thing seen in the Book of Jonah and elsewhere in Scripture. The Jews presently in the land must be cast from the ship into the sea [a place typifying “death” and “the Gentiles”].

They must be removed from their land and driven back out among the Gentile nations once again. And *among the nations [in the sea]* the Jewish people will be viewed as *dead* [as Lazarus in the seventh sign in John’s gospel, John chapter eleven], awaiting God’s breath to bring about *life* [Ezek. 37:1-14]. Then, and only then [after life has been restored], can they be removed from the sea, from the nations.

God drove His people out among the nations to deal with them there relative to *repentance*, and that

is exactly where He will deal with them at the end of Man’s Day. If for no other reason than this, the Jewish people presently in the land *must* be uprooted and driven back out among the nations.

That is not only the place where God has decreed that He will deal with them but that is also the place from whence God will regather them when He brings them back into the land, *following repentance, belief, and the restoration of life.*)

The Jewish people were carried away into Babylon by the first king of Babylon, which marked the beginning of the Times of the Gentiles. This was also the beginning of the Jewish association with Babylon. And most of the Jews carried away never left Babylon at the end of the seventy years to return to their land (Jer. 25:11, 12; cf. II Chron. 36:20, 21; Dan. 9:1, 2). *They had found a home in Babylon. In this respect, as long as Babylon remained in existence, the association of the Jewish people with Babylon could only have continued.*

In the latter days, when the final form of Daniel’s image appears — the final form of the kingdom of Babylon — *Israel will be left without a choice other than to see the nation’s harlotry brought into full bloom within the kingdom of Antichrist*. The things seen in the vision of the ephah will be brought to pass during the days of the last king of Babylon, with “Israel” enmeshed in the final form of this Babylonian kingdom to the extent that *the nation is spoken of in synonymous terms* with “Babylon” in Revelation chapter seventeen through the opening verses of chapter nineteen.

These are the things forming the Old Testament connection which allow “Babylon” to be used as a metaphor for *Jerusalem* in the Book of Revelation — as previously seen, a reference used more directly for *the people of the city, the Jewish people* (cf. Ps. 122:6; Jer. 44:13; Lam. 1:7, 8, 17; Matt. 23:37; Rev. 21:9, 10).

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