

## Reading Guide for Ezekiel 20:1-44

This unit is dated August 591 B.C., during the seventh year of the exile that began in 597 B.C. (v. 1). It begins with the elders of the exilic community in Babylon coming to Ezekiel seeking a word from the Lord, which He refuses to give, and confirms it with an oath (v. 3). But rather than end there, the Lord commands Ezekiel to judge them, so as to explain the reason for His refusal (v. 4). What follows is a recounting of Israel's early history, beginning with the first two generations that left Egypt in the exodus to the entrance into Canaan. It is not, however, a story of triumph and deliverance, but one of frequent apostasy and rebellion, revealing that at every moment, God had nearly destroyed them. It was for the sake of God's own name they remained alive. The history of Israel's rebellion is emphasized in order to cause the present generation to reflect on their own sin (vv. 30-31a), much like Stephen's speech to the Jewish leaders in Acts 7. A restatement of God's oath that He will not be consulted by them affirms His decision (v. 31b).

This is followed by a statement from the people who proclaim they will be like the nations, serving wood and stone rather than the true God (v. 32). The Lord, however, will not stand for it. The Lord's response is to make another oath that *He* will reign over them. The exile from the land is in order to bring them back through the wilderness of judgment in order to make a new covenant with them and purge the evil from their midst (vv. 33-38). In addition, they will return to the land (vv. 39-42), not with idolatry in their hearts, but with repentance that leads to grace (vv. 43-44).

### **ISRAEL'S PAST AND CURRENT SIN (20:1-31)**

#### **The Elders Seek a Work from the Lord (20:1)**

#### **The Lord's Response: He will Not Be Consulted by Them (20:2-3)**

#### **Recounting Israel's History of Apostasy (20:4-29)**

Command to Ezekiel to Judge Them (vv. 4-5a)

Rebellion in the Exodus from Egypt (vv. 5b-9)

Rebellion of the First Generation in the Wilderness (vv. 10-17)

Rebellion of the Second Generation in the Wilderness (vv. 18-26)

Rebellion in the Land (vv. 27-29)

#### **The Apostasy in the Current Generation (20:30-31a)**

#### **The Lord's Affirmation: He will Not be Consulted by Them (20:31b)**

### **THE LORD'S FUTURE PLANS (20:32-44)**

#### **Israel's Proclamation that They will be Like the Nations (20:32)**

#### **The Lord's Response (20:33-44)**

*The Lord will be Their King (v. 33)*

*A New Exodus from the Exile (v. 34)*

*A New Judgment and Covenant in the Wilderness (vv. 35-38)*

*A Return to the Land and to True Worship (vv. 39-42)*

*The People will Display Repentance There (vv. 43-44)*