

An odd statement

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THERE IS an odd statement to be found in Ezekiel 21:21: "he looked in the liver". The following quotation gives the context:

"The word of the LORD came unto me again, saying, Also, thou son of man, appoint thee two ways, that the sword of the king of Babylon may come: both twain shall come forth out of one land: and choose thou a place, choose it at the head of the way to the city. Appoint a way, that the sword may come to Rabbath of the Ammonites, and to Judah in Jerusalem the defenced. For the king of Babylon stood at the parting of the way, at the head of the two ways, to use divination: he made his arrows bright, he consulted with images, *he looked in the liver*. At his right hand was the divination for Jerusalem, to appoint captains, to open the mouth in the slaughter, to lift up the voice with shouting, to appoint battering rams against the gates, to cast a mount, and to build a fort. And it shall be unto them as a false divination in their sight, to them that have sworn oaths: but He will call to remembrance the iniquity, that they may be taken. Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD; Because ye have made your iniquity to be remembered, in that your transgressions are discovered, so that in all your doings your sins do appear; because, I say, that ye are come to remembrance, ye shall be taken with the hand" (vv. 18-24).

The King of Babylon was looking at a sheep's liver to make a divination. In fact he was probably looking at damage caused by the liver fluke parasite! What was this all about? Here is a quotation from the British Museum's website:

"The Babylonians believed that the world was controlled by gods and that they could give indications of coming events. One of the most widespread means of prediction was the liver omen, in which a sheep was killed and its liver and lungs examined by a specialist priest, the *baru*. He would ask a particular question and the answer would be supplied

by the interpretation of individual markings or overall shape of the liver and lungs. One could then take steps to avoid danger. On this model [as pictured below] each box describes the implications of a blemish appearing at this position. Earlier model livers are known from the site of Mari on the Euphrates.

"We know from ancient texts that the *baru* was one of the most important scholars in Mesopotamia. He had to be the descendant of a free man and healthy in body and mind. The *baru* played an important part in decision making at all levels but particularly where the king was concerned. No military campaign, building work, appointment of an official, or matters of the king's health would be undertaken without consulting the *baru*".

The picture is of a clay sheep's liver as used to train the diviners. It is displayed in

the British Museum and captioned, "Old Babylonian, about 1900-1600 BC. Probably from Sippar, southern Iraq".

The practice was later followed, like much of Babylon's mythology, by Rome, as the following quotation shows:

"In the Roman religion, a *haruspex* was a man trained to practise divination by the inspection of the entrails of sacrificed animals, especially the livers of sacrificed sheep; and in the interpretation of lightning strikes and other unusual omens. The plural is *haruspices*.

"The practice of *haruspicy*, the name for this kind of divination, was said to have originated among the ancient Etruscans. A bronze sculpture of a liver, complete with the name of regions marked on it assigned to various gods, was discovered in 1877 near Piacenza, in northern Italy, and has been connected to the practice of *haruspicy*" (*Wikipedia*).

From the above quotations it is also clear that the marks on the liver were used to represent various regions, which explains why the king was looking at the liver for divination regarding a battle against Jerusalem. What is more, this brief study gives us yet another example of Rome being the "Mystery, Babylon the Great" of Revelation 17:5 by following the traditions of ancient Babylon.

