

Ezekiel 19 - Prophecies Concerning Judgment Against Judah and Jerusalem; Summary of Ezek 12-19

I. Imminent judgment upon Judah (Ezek 1:1—24:27)

(2) Prophecies of coming judgment against Judah and Jerusalem (Ezek 4:1—24:27)

(B) Shattering false securities (Ezek 12:1—19:14)

(j) Conclusion: funeral dirge for Jerusalem's princes (19:1-14)

(i) Jehoahaz (19:1-4)

(ii) Jehoiachin (19:5-9)

(iii) Zedekiah and the destruction of the vine (19:10-14)

Ezekiel 19

(j) Conclusion: funeral dirge for Jerusalem's princes (19:1-14)

Ezek 19 encompasses the final prophecy in the series of oracles that began in 12:1 and primarily addressed Judah's misguided optimism. The chapter bemoans Judah and her leadership. It is the first of five lamentations in Ezekiel. The other four are found in 26:17-18; 27:2-36; 28:12-19; 32:1-16.

(i) Jehoahaz (19:1-4)

1 "As for you, take up a **song of mourning** for **the leaders of Israel**

1 "As for you, take up a lamentation for the princes of Israel

1 "Now as for you, publish this mourning psalm about Israel's leaders.

1 Moreover take thou up a lamentation for the princes of Israel,

- "...a song of mourning" - Ezekiel is commanded to speak a lamentation or dirge. He obeyed this command (Cf. v14b).

- "...the leaders of Israel" - the object of this lamentation or dirge

2 and say, 'What was your mother? A **lioness** among lions! She **lay down among young lions**, She raised her cubs.

2 and say, 'What was your mother? A lioness among lions! She lay down among young lions, She reared her cubs.

2 Tell them: 'What a lioness your mother was among lions! She reared her cubs in the midst of fierce young males.

2 And say, What is thy mother? A lioness: she lay down among lions, she nourished her whelps among young lions.

- "...lioness" - represents the kingdom of Judah (Cf. Gen 49:8-9)

- "...lay down among young lions" - refers to the nations surrounding Judah

3 'When she brought up **one of her cubs**, He became **a young lion**, And he learned to tear *his* prey; He devoured people.

3 'When she brought up one of her cubs, He became a lion, And he learned to tear *his* prey; He devoured men.

3 She raised one cub in particular, teaching that fierce lion to become a hunter-prowler—to eat human beings.

3 And she brought up one of her whelps: it became a young lion, and it learned to catch the prey; it devoured men.

- The focus now shifts from the lioness to one of her cubs...

- "...one of her cubs...a young lion" - the text does not identify who the young lion represents, but the predatory nature of lions often refers to human violence (Cf. Gen 49:9; Ps 17:12; Jer 2:15,30; 12:8; Dan 7:4; Hosea 11:10; Zeph 3:3). Thus, this lion probably symbolizes a specific person.

4 'Then **nations heard about him**; He was **caught in their trap**, And **they brought him with hooks To the land of Egypt**.

4 'Then nations heard about him; He was captured in their pit, And they brought him with hooks To the land of Egypt.

4 The nations heard about him. He had become caught in their trap. They brought him with hooks to the land of Egypt.

4 The nations also heard of him; he was taken in their pit, and they brought him with chains unto the land of Egypt.

- "...nations heard about him" - the lion's reputation spread rapidly to the surrounding nations

- "...caught in their trap" - they joined forces to trap him in their pit

- "...they brought him with hooks To the land of Egypt" - provides a clue as to the identity of this lion: Jehoahaz, who was one of Judah's last kings to be taken to Egypt (2 Kings 23:34)

(ii) Jehoiachin (19:5-9)

5 'When she saw, as she waited, **Thather hope was lost**, She took another of her cubs And made him a young lion.

5 'When she saw, as she waited, *That* her hope was lost, She took another of her cubs And made him a young lion.

5 When she learned that her plans had been frustrated and that her hopes were dashed, she took **another of her cubs** and turned him into a fierce lion.

5 Now when she saw that she had waited, and her hope was lost, then she took another of her whelps, and made him a young lion.

- "...her hope was lost" - Judah lost hope that Jehoahaz would be released by Pharaoh and reclaim his throne

— When the mother lion saw that her first cub was seized and would not return, she elevated another cub to a prominent position within her litter

- "...another of her cubs" - scholars do not agree on the identity of this cub. King Jehoahaz' successor was Jehoiakim, but many conservative scholars (Fruchtenbaum, Walvoord) believe it symbolizes Jehoiachin.

— *The king after Jehoahaz was Jehoiakim, but Ezekiel did not refer to him in this chapter. [In the context of the allegory,] Ezekiel emphasized that Zedekiah would be taken into captivity, so he mentioned only those kings who suffered a similar fate, Jehoahaz and Jehoiachin. Jehoiakim died in Jerusalem, so he was not included in this lament.* [Walvoord]

— Jehoiachin was the son of King Jehoiakim and a grandson of Josiah. He is also known as Jeconiah (1 Chr 3:16) and Coniah (Jer. 22:24). His reign is recorded in 2 Kings 24:8-16 and 2 Chr 36:9-10.

— He assumed the throne in 597 BC, at the age of 18, and committed acts of evil in the eyes of the Lord. Consequently, his reign lasted a mere three months and ten days (2 Chr 36:9).

— During the siege of Jerusalem by King Nebuchadnezzar, Jehoiachin surrendered to Babylon. This fulfilled prophecies made against Judah as a result of Manasseh's sins (2 Kings 24:2-4; 2 Chr 36:15-21).

— Nebuchadnezzar imprisoned Jehoiachin, his family, and his royal court and deported them together with ten thousand others (2 Kings 24:14), including the prophet Ezekiel, to Babylon (2 Kings 24:15-16; Ezek 1:1-2).

— Thirty-seven years after his deportation, Jehoiachin was granted a measure of freedom. At that time, Evil-Merodach had ascended to the throne of Babylon (2 Kings 25:27; Jer 52:31). He granted Jehoiachin an honorary seat at his table and a daily allowance (2 Kings 25:28-30; Jer 52:31-34).

6 'And he walked about among the lions, He became a young lion; He learned to tear *his* prey; He devoured people.

6 'And he walked about among the lions; He became a young lion, He learned to tear *his* prey; He devoured men.

6 He prowled around among the lions, became a strong, young lion, and learned to become a hunter-prowler— to eat human beings.

6 And he went up and down among the lions, he became a young lion, and learned to catch the prey, and devoured men.

- This lion quickly asserted his dominance within the pride. He not only mastered the art of hunting prey, but also developed an unnatural appetite for men.

7 'He destroyed their **palaces** And laid waste their cities; And the land and its fullness were appalled Because of the sound of his roaring.

7 'He destroyed their fortified towers And laid waste their cities; And the land and its fullness were appalled Because of the sound of his roaring.

7 He raped the women, devastating their towns. The land was made desolate, and all the while the land was filled with the sound of his roaring.

7 And **he knew** their desolate palaces, and he laid waste their cities; and the land was desolate, and the fullness thereof, by the noise of his roaring.

- "...he knew" [KJV] - *yada*, intimate knowledge, akin to that between husbands and wives; it is the most common Hebrew word for marital sex (Cf. Gen 4:17; 1 Sam 1:19)

- "...palaces" - '*almenotav*, means "widows"; the literal reading implies that he committed terrible crimes, killing husbands then raping the widows

8 'Then nations set against him On every side from *their* provinces, And they spread their net over him; He was caught in their trap.

8 'Then nations set against him On every side from *their* provinces, And they spread their net over him; He was captured in their pit.

8 The surrounding nations attacked. They tossed their net over him, and he was caught in their trap.

8 Then the nations set against him on every side from the provinces, and spread their net over him: he was taken in their pit.

- Similar to Jehoahaz, Jehoiachin ultimately fell into captivity. The surrounding nations lined up against him, trapping him in their pit.

9 'They put him in a wooden collar with hooks And brought him to the king of Babylon; They brought him in hunting nets So that his voice would no longer be heard On the mountains of Israel.

9 'They put him in a cage with hooks And brought him to the king of Babylon; They brought him in hunting nets So that his voice would be heard no more On the mountains of Israel.

9 They imprisoned him in a cage with hooks and brought him to the king of Babel. Then they placed him in their dungeon where his voice would no longer be heard on the mountains of Israel.

9 And they put him in ward in chains, and brought him to the king of Babylon: they brought him into holds, that his voice should no more be heard upon the mountains of Israel.

- Jehoiachin was taken into captivity in a cage and brought before the king of Babylon. His voice would no longer be heard in Israel.

— Jehoiachin was an evil king, and his punishment went beyond his exile. God placed a blood curse on him (Jer 22:30), meaning that no descendant of Jehoiachin would ever inherit the throne of David. With Jehoiachin, this particular lineage of Davidic kings ended.

— This fact carries profound implications for the Messiah, who was prophesied to be the Son of David (2 Sam 7:12-16): He could not be descended from Jehoiachin.

— However, Joseph was descended from this very king (Matt 1:11). If Joseph was Jesus' biological father (and he was not), Jesus could never ascend to the throne of David. Yet, promises of His kingship were prophesied in passages such as Jer 23:5 and Is 9:7; 33:22. Thus, His right to the Davidic throne had to come through His mother (which it did, Cf. Luke 3:23-38).

(iii) Zedekiah and the destruction of the vine (19:10-14)

10 'Your mother was like a **vine** in **your** vineyard, Planted by the waters; It was **fruitful and thick with branches** Because of abundant waters.

10 'Your mother was like a vine in your vineyard, Planted by the waters; It was fruitful and full of branches Because of abundant waters.

10 'Your mother was like a vine entwining a pomegranate, planted by water, full of fruit, and full of branches because it had been watered generously.

10 Thy mother is like a vine in thy blood, planted by the waters: she was fruitful and full of branches by reason of many waters.

- "...your" [2x] - the vine again is Judah, but the prophecy refers to Zedekiah, the last king of Judah. This prophecy is directed to him personally ("your").

— Zedekiah reigned for 11 years (597-586 BC). According to 2 Kings 24:17, his original name was Mattaniah. His reign is recorded in 2 Kings 24:17—25:7; 2 Chr 36:11-21.

- "...a vine" - the imagery now changes to a vine instead of a lion

— Just as the figure of Judah as a lion goes back to Gen 49:9-12, so does the symbolism of a vine (esp Gen 49:11-12)

- "...fruitful and thick with branches" - describes Judah, in her former glory, blessed by God and had flourished and produced many branches (rulers)

— In 17:7-8, Ezekiel compared Zedekiah to such a vine, indicating that the king was well situated in Jerusalem and could succeed there as long as he remained loyal to

Nebuchadnezzar

11 'And it had strong stems *fit* for scepters of rulers, And its height was raised above the clouds So that it was seen in its height with the mass of its branches.

11 'And it had strong branches *fit* for scepters of rulers, And its height was raised above the clouds So that it was seen in its height with the mass of its branches.

11 Strong were its boughs, suitable for use in the scepter of a ruler. It reached to the clouds, noticeable because of its height and its abundant branches.

11 And she had strong rods for the sceptres of them that bare rule, and her stature was exalted among the thick branches, and she appeared in her height with the multitude of her branches.

- Those remaining in Judah after the first and second deportations to Babylon found themselves in circumstances where they could flourish as long as they maintained submission to Babylon

12 'But it was uprooted in fury; It was thrown down to the ground; And the east wind dried up its fruit. Its strong **stem** was torn out So that it withered; The fire consumed it.

12 'But it was plucked up in fury; It was cast down to the ground; And the east wind dried up its fruit. Its strong branch was torn off So that it withered; The fire consumed it.

12 Yet in anger it was uprooted and cast down to the earth. An east wind desiccated its fruit; its strong branches broke off and withered, and a fire consumed them.

12 But she was plucked up in fury, she was cast down to the ground, and the east wind dried up her fruit: her strong rods were broken and withered; the fire consumed them.

- Prophetically describes the downfall of Jerusalem in 586 BC

— When Babylon began their third (final) siege of Jerusalem in 586 BC, they cut off the water supply to the city, causing it to wither like a plant in the desert

- "...stem" - refers to Zedekiah

13 'And now it is planted in the wilderness, In a dry and thirsty land.

13 'And now it is planted in the wilderness, In a dry and thirsty land.

13 Now it is planted in the desert, in a dry and thirsty land!

13 And now she is planted in the wilderness, in a dry and thirsty ground.

- Prophesied that Zedekiah would be taken into captivity, along with the remaining leaders of Judah

14 'And **fire has gone out from its stem**; It has consumed its shoots *and* fruit, So that there is no strong stem in it, A scepter to rule.'" This is a song of mourning, and has become a song of mourning.

14 'And fire has gone out from *its* branch; It has consumed its shoots *and* fruit, So that there is not in it a strong branch, A scepter to rule.'" This is a lamentation, and has become a lamentation.

14 Fire had burned through its branches, consuming its shoots and fruits. No strong branches remain in it, and there is no scepter to rule!' "This is a lamentation, and it is to be used in mourning."

14 And fire is gone out of a rod of her branches, which hath devoured her fruit, so that she hath no strong rod to be a sceptre to rule. This is a lamentation, and shall be for a lamentation.

- "...fire has gone out from *its* stem" - in v12 the fire was set against Zedekiah and his people by an outside force; in this verse, the fire is described as having gone out of the stem of its branches, devouring its own fruit.

— In other words, the ultimate source of this destruction was not Babylon, but the vine (Judah) itself. The rulers themselves had brought about their own demise. The specific event that precipitated the fall of Judah was Zedekiah's act of rebellion against the king of Babylon (2 Kings 24:30).

- This chapter concludes by reiterating that these words were meant as a lamentation. Ezekiel is emphasizing a point made by many other OT prophets, even Jesus Himself, that Israel's rulers consistently led their people astray, and they bear responsibility for the judgment brought upon the land.

Summary of Ezek 12-19 [Fruchtenbaum]

Ezek 12–19 contains a series of prophecies, parables, and analogies that explain why the judgment on Judah had become necessary. The people of Judah, in turn, put forth seven reasons for rejecting YHWH and the prophets' messages to them:

1. The false prophets preached a message of imminent deliverance and a swift return to the homeland. So, why believe the messages of Jeremiah and Ezekiel, who were preaching the opposite (Ezek 13–14)?
2. Judgment would only befall the leaders and not the general populace (14:1-11).
3. The intercession of any righteous person could avert the judgment (14:12-23).
4. God would never enact such severe judgment upon His chosen people (Ezek 15–16).
5. Judging them for the fathers' sins was unfair (Ezek 17).
6. If judgment was inevitable, then repentance was useless (Ezek 18).
7. King Zedekiah would find a way to defeat the Babylonians (Ezek 19).

None of these reasons held merit. The tipping point for judgment was King Manasseh's abominations, marking a point of no return decreed by God. However, despite this decree, YHWH offered the opportunity for judgment to be delayed if the people repented. This was

the central message of Jeremiah and Ezekiel. Repentance could forestall the impending judgment.

These chapters also outline seven reasons for Judah's impending destruction:

1. Judah failed to submit to God's discipline and continued to rebel, refusing to live according to His law (12:1-20).
2. The nation rejected divine revelation by disregarding the messages of God's true prophets and instead heeded the words of false prophets (Ezek 13-14).
3. Judah lacked faithfulness (Ezek 15).
4. In fact, the nation had a longstanding history of unfaithfulness (Ezek 16).
5. Judah placed her trust in political alliances, such as with Egypt, rather than relying on God for security (Ezek 17).
6. Judah refused to acknowledge her own sin and take responsibility for it (Ezek 18).
7. Judah was spiritually dead, and her impending political demise would mirror this spiritual condition (Ezek 19).