

# Ezekiel 31 - Fifth Oracle: Egypt To Meet the Same Fate as Assyria: Total Destruction; Assyria's and Egypt's Physical & Spiritual Demise

II. Imminent judgment upon surrounding nations (Ezek 25:1—32:32)

(4) Nation to the south of Judah: Egypt (Ezek 29:1—32:32)

(E) Egypt to experience the same fate as Assyria (31:1-18)

(a) Assyria's former glory (31:1-9)

(b) Egypt's imminent destruction (31:10-18)

## Ezekiel 31

(E) Egypt to experience the same fate as Assyria (31:1-18)

(a) Assyria's former glory (31:1-9)

**1** In **the eleventh year, in the third month, on the first of the month**, the word of the LORD came to me, saying,

**1** In the eleventh year, in the third *month*, on the first of the month, the word of the LORD came to me saying,

**1** On the first day of the third month of the eleventh year of our captivity, this message came to me from the LORD:

**1** And it came to pass in the eleventh year, in the third month, in the first day of the month, that the word of the LORD came unto me, saying,

- "...the eleventh year, in the third *month*, on the first of the month" - June 21, 587 BC, two months after the prophecy of the fourth oracle (Cf. 30:20-26), and less than three months before Jerusalem was completely destroyed.

**2** "Son of man, say to **Pharaoh king of Egypt** and to his hordes, 'Whom are you like in your greatness?'

**2** "Son of man, say to Pharaoh king of Egypt and to his hordes, 'Whom are you like in your greatness?'

**2** "Son of Man, tell this to Pharaoh, king of Egypt and his gangs: 'Who do you think you are? What makes you so great?'

2 Son of man, speak unto Pharaoh king of Egypt, and to his multitude; Whom art thou like in thy greatness?

- "...Pharaoh king of Egypt" - the fifth oracle to Ezekiel is addressed directly to Pharaoh Hophra

3 'Behold, Assyria was a cedar in Lebanon With beautiful branches and forest shade, And very high, And its top was among the clouds.

3 'Behold, Assyria was a cedar in Lebanon With beautiful branches and forest shade, And very high, And its top was among the clouds.

3 Think about Assyria, that cedar of Lebanon, beautiful with its branches, like a shady forest, with an awesome height, its summit touches the clouds.

3 Behold, the Assyrian was a cedar in Lebanon with fair branches, and with a shadowing shroud, and of an high stature; and his top was among the thick boughs.

- God begins this oracle by comparing Egypt to Assyria. He described Assyria as a massive cedar tree that once overshadowed the forest with its beautiful branches, and towered high above the thick boughs or foliage of other trees. This description emphasizes the greatness, might, and power of the Assyrian Empire.

4 'The waters made it grow, the deep made it high. With its rivers it continually extended all around its planting place, And sent out its channels to all the trees of the field.

4 'The waters made it grow, the deep made it high. With its rivers it continually extended all around its planting place, And sent out its channels to all the trees of the field.

4 Abundant water made it great, Subterranean rivers made it grow. Rivers surrounded the area where it had been planted, and water channels nourished all the trees in the fields.

4 The waters made him great, the deep set him up on high with her rivers running round about his plants, and sent out her little rivers unto all the trees of the field.

- Now He described the ideal conditions that contributed to the growth and grandeur of the tree. It was well watered by several sources: abundant waters; deep springs provided it with growth; rivers encircled its base, enduring a steady water supply; and these rivers spread out their channels to nourish all the trees of the field.

5 'Therefore its height was loftier than all the trees of the field And its boughs became many and its branches long Because of many waters as it spread them out.

5 'Therefore its height was loftier than all the trees of the field And its boughs became many and its branches long Because of many waters as it spread them out.

5 That's why it grew taller than any of the trees in the fields. Its boughs flourished. Its branches grew luxurious because all the water made it spread out well.

5 Therefore his height was exalted above all the trees of the field, and his boughs were multiplied, and his branches became long because of the multitude of waters, when he shot forth.

- While v4 focused on the continuous supply of nourishment, v5 focuses on Assyria's dominance of other countries. Assyria was able to harness its natural resources to build a formidable army and achieve significant power and authority.

- The tree (Assyria) was exalted due to ample nourishment, to the point that its stature was elevated above all the trees of the field. Its foliage multiplied, its branches grew long, because of the abundant waters.

— The focus is on Assyria's superiority, made possible by its limitless resources and expansion.

6 'All the birds of the sky nested in its twigs, And under its branches all the animals of the field gave birth, And all great nations lived under its shade.

6 'All the birds of the heavens nested in its boughs, And under its branches all the beasts of the field gave birth, And all great nations lived under its shade.

6 The birds in the sky made nests in its boughs; all the beasts of the field gave birth under its branches. All the great nations rested in its shade.

6 All the fowls of heaven made their nests in his boughs, and under his branches did all the beasts of the field bring forth their young, and under his shadow dwelt all great nations.

- This verse emphasizes Assyria's extensive influence. It provided habitat for all the birds of the heavens. It also offered shelter for the beasts of the field, where they brought forth their young under her branches. Its shadow was a refuge for all great nations.

— This imagery emphasizes Assyria's dominance and control over other countries, highlighting its role as a powerful and influential entity.

7 'So it was **beautiful in its greatness, in the length of its branches; For its roots extended to many waters.**

7 'So it was beautiful in its greatness, in the length of its branches; For its roots extended to many waters.

7 'Beautiful because it was so great, with its long branches, it was rooted in many bodies of water.

7 Thus was he fair in his greatness, in the length of his branches: for his root was by great waters.

- A summary of the description of Assyria from v3-6...

- "...beautiful in its greatness" - the nation was impressive in its greatness (v3)

- "...in the length of its branches" - captures its expansion and superiority (v5)

- "...its roots extended to many waters" - many waters nourished Assyria's roots, referring to a constant flow of resources (v4)

8 'The cedars in God's garden could not match it; The junipers could not compare with its branches, And the plane trees could not match its branches. No tree in God's garden could compare with it in its beauty.

8 'The cedars in God's garden could not match it; The cypresses could not compare with its boughs, And the plane trees could not match its branches. No tree in God's garden could compare with it in its beauty.

8 The cedars in God's garden could not compare to it; Fir trees could not match its boughs. The plane tree never grew branches like it, and no tree in God's garden compares to its beauty.

8 The cedars in the garden of God could not hide him: the fir trees were not like his boughs, and the chesnut trees were not like his branches; nor any tree in the garden of God was like unto him in his beauty.

- God now draws a comparison between Assyria's significance and the trees in the Garden of Eden ("God's garden"). The reference to Eden is significant because Eden was located in the region that would later become Assyria (Cf. Gen 2:10-14).

— The description of Assyria in this verse highlights the nation's unmatched glory. No tree in Eden was comparable to Assyria in terms of beauty and grandeur.

9 'I made it beautiful with the multitude of its branches, And all the trees of Eden, which were in the garden of God, were jealous of it.

9 'I made it beautiful with the multitude of its branches, And all the trees of Eden, which were in the garden of God, were jealous of it.

9 I made it beautiful, including all of its branches; all the trees in God's garden of Eden envied it!"

9 I have made him fair by the multitude of his branches: so that all the trees of Eden, that were in the garden of God, envied him.

- The trees of Eden expressed envy at the comparison with this unique cedar tree. This tree stood out for its multitude of branches, but the One who allowed this grandeur to blossom was God Himself. He alone made Assyria beautiful.

(b) Egypt's imminent destruction (31:10-18)

Verses 10-14 describe the falling of the mighty cedar tree (Assyria), and the consequences for Egypt and other nations.

**10** 'Therefore this is what the Lord GOD says: "Because it is tall in stature and has put its top among the clouds, and **its heart is haughty in its loftiness,**

**10** 'Therefore thus says the Lord GOD, "Because it is high in stature and has set its top among the clouds, and its heart is haughty in its loftiness,

**10** "Therefore this is what the Lord GOD says: 'Because of its towering height, with its summit reaching into the clouds, and because it was haughty in its position,

**10** Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD; Because thou hast lifted up thyself in height, and he hath shot up his top among the thick boughs, and his heart is lifted up in his height;

- God now addresses the cause of the judgment by detailing the charges against Assyria and thus also against Egypt.

- "Therefore" - does not refer to what was said previously, but rather about what is about to be said.

- "...its heart is haughty in its loftiness" - because of pride; in v2, God asked Egypt, 'Whom are you like in your greatness?' Like Assyria, Egypt became prideful and arrogant, just like Assyria. What Assyria was, Egypt became.

— The cedar tree grew higher and higher until it reached the clouds. At that point, "its heart is haughty in its loftiness" meaning the cedar became proud of its height, of its accomplishments, its size, its power. This pride is what caused Assyria to fall.

**11** I will hand it over to a **ruler** of the nations; he will thoroughly deal with it. **In accordance with its wickedness I have driven it out.**

**11** therefore I will give it into the hand of a despot of the nations; he will thoroughly deal with it. According to its wickedness I have driven it away.

**11** I turned it over to the leader of those 6 nations, who dealt with it thoroughly. I have driven it away because of its wickedness.

**11** I have therefore delivered him into the hand of the mighty one of the heathen; he shall surely deal with him: I have driven him out for his wickedness.

- The consequences of Assyria's pride was that God declared that He delivered the cedar tree ("it," meaning Assyria) over to "a ruler of the nations."

- "...ruler" - 'e/, primarily refers to the God of Israel, but sometimes it's also applied to men of might and rank. Here, it specifically refers to Nebuchadnezzar, who as an instrument of divine justice, brought about Assyria's downfall and was soon to execute similar judgment on Egypt.

- "...In accordance with its wickedness" - the sin of pride led to God's declaration of judgment upon Assyria, but as far as the degree of that judgment is concerned, that was determined by the people's wickedness.

- "...I have driven it out" - the driving force behind this judgment was God Himself

12 **Foreign tyrants of the nations** have **cut it down and left it**; on the mountains and in all the valleys its branches have fallen, and its branches have been broken in all the ravines of the land. And all the peoples of the earth have gone down from its shade and left it.

12 Alien tyrants of the nations have cut it down and left it; on the mountains and in all the valleys its branches have fallen and its boughs have been broken in all the ravines of the land. And all the peoples of the earth have gone down from its shade and left it.

12 Foreign dictators have trimmed it down to size and abandoned it. Its branches have fallen off on mountains and in all the valleys. Its boughs have broken off in all the ravines of the land. All the nations of the earth have moved out of its shade and abandoned it.

12 And strangers, the terrible of the nations, have cut him off, and have left him: upon the mountains and in all the valleys his branches are fallen, and his boughs are broken by all the rivers of the land; and all the people of the earth are gone down from his shadow, and have left him.

- "Foreign tyrants of the nations" - Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonians

- "...cut it down and left it" - they completely destroyed the once-mighty cedar tree and left him to exist no more

Historically, the Babylonians defeated Assyria by destroying Nineveh in 612 BC. The last Assyrian king, Ashurballit II, had sought Egyptian assistance against the rising Babylonian power. Pharaoh Necho II heeded this call and led his army north along the Way of the Sea to support Assyria in a final confrontation with Babylon. During this period, King Josiah of Judah attempted to block Necho's advance at Megiddo, resulting in his death in 610/609 BC (2 Kings 23:29; 2 Chr 35:20-27). This delay allowed Babylon to secure a decisive victory over Assyria. Upon returning to Egypt, Pharaoh Necho deposed Josiah's son Jehoahaz and installed his brother Jehoiakim as a puppet king so that Judah would act as a buffer state against Babylon (2 Kings 23:31-35; 2 Chr 36:1-5). The intervention of Egyptian forces only intensified Babylon's resolve for retribution. In 606/605 BC, Pharaoh Necho was defeated by Nebuchadnezzar at the Battle of Carchemish (Jer 46:2). With this victory, Babylon cemented its dominance over the region, effectively controlling the territory from the Euphrates to the Nile. Assyria did not even exist as a lesser nation after it was destroyed by the Babylonians. It simply ceased to exist. The mighty cedar had fallen. [Fruchtenbaum]

13 All the birds of the sky will nest on its fallen trunk, and all the animals of the field will rest on its *fallen* branches,

13 On its ruin all the birds of the heavens will dwell, and all the beasts of the field will be on its *fallen* branches

13 All the birds in the sky will live among its ruins, and the wild animals will forage among its branches.

13 Upon his ruin shall all the fowls of the heaven remain, and all the beasts of the field shall be upon his branches:

14 so that all the trees *by* the waters will not be exalted in their stature, nor put their tops among the clouds, nor will any of their well-watered mighty ones stand *straight* in their height. For they have all been turned over to death, to the earth beneath, among mankind, with those who go down to the pit."

14 so that all the trees by the waters may not be exalted in their stature, nor set their top among the clouds, nor their well-watered mighty ones stand *erect* in their height. For they have all been given over to death, to the earth beneath, among the sons of men, with those who go down to the pit."

14 As a result, none of its watered trees will grow tall, their tops will never reach to the clouds, and they'll never grow so high again, because all of them have been appointed to death in the world beneath where human beings go, that is, down to the Pit."

14 To the end that none of all the trees by the waters exalt themselves for their height, neither shoot up their top among the thick boughs, neither their trees stand up in their height, all that drink water: for they are all delivered unto death, to the nether parts of the earth, in the midst of the children of men, with them that go down to the pit.

- Two primary points from the fall of Assyria: first, the Assyrian Empire ceased to exist, and second, the nation's fall served as a cautionary lesson for other countries, causing them to refrain from imitating Assyria's pride and arrogance. By doing so, they would avoid a similar judgment.

— Egypt, however, did not heed this warning but instead fell into the same sin as Assyria and consequently faced a similar judgment at the hands of the Babylonians.

- The second half of this verse is a summary statement about the fate awaiting any nation that follows the examples of Assyria and Egypt: such nations are destined for death, both physically and spiritually. Death here refers to complete demise, physical death and spiritual descent into Sheol.

**15** 'This is what the Lord GOD says: "On the day when it went down to Sheol I caused mourning; I closed the deep over it and held back its rivers. And *its* many waters were stopped up, and I made Lebanon mourn for it, and all the trees of the field wilted away on account of it.

**15** 'Thus says the Lord GOD, "On the day when it went down to Sheol I caused lamentations; I closed the deep over it and held back its rivers. And *its* many waters were

stopped up, and I made Lebanon mourn for it, and all the trees of the field wilted away on account of it.

**15** "This is what the Lord GOD says: 'On the day that it descended into Sheol, I shut down its water supplies, covered over its deep water, and shut down its rivers. As a result its abundant water sources dried up, and I caused Lebanon to mourn for it. All the trees of the field wilted because of it.

**15** Thus saith the Lord GOD; In the day when he went down to the grave I caused a mourning: I covered the deep for him, and I restrained the floods thereof, and the great waters were stayed: and I caused Lebanon to mourn for him, and all the trees of the field fainted for him.

- The grief at Assyria's fall was so profound that it seemed as though the entire universe had come to a halt. Even Lebanon, known for its majestic cedars, mourned the loss of the greatest of all trees, Assyria.

— Assyria's fall instilled such fear and produced such disruption that it caused all other nations to tremble at the prospect of their own downfall.

**16** I made the nations quake from the sound of its fall when I made it go down to Sheol with those who go down to the pit; and **all the well-watered trees of Eden, the choicest and best of Lebanon,** were **comforted** in the earth beneath.

**16** I made the nations quake at the sound of its fall when I made it go down to Sheol with those who go down to the pit; and all the well-watered trees of Eden, the choicest and best of Lebanon, were comforted in the earth beneath.

**16** I made the nations tremble when they heard that Assyria was falling, descending into Sheol to join those who go down into the Pit. Then all of the trees of Eden in the world below were comforted, including the choicest and best of Lebanon, all of whom were well-watered.

**16** I made the nations to shake at the sound of his fall, when I cast him down to hell with them that descend into the pit: and all the trees of Eden, the choice and best of Lebanon, all that drink water, shall be comforted in the nether parts of the earth.

- The broader impact of Assyria's fall and casting into Sheol caused other countries to "quake" with fear and dread. Assyria's fall inflicted profound terror upon its allies, who were linked to the empire either economically or politically.

— The complete downfall of such a powerful nation raised existential concerns for these aligned countries

- "...all the well-watered trees of Eden, the choicest and best of Lebanon" - represent the nations within the Assyrian Empire

- "...comforted" - implies a grim solace in the certainty of death; they might have found a form of comfort in Assyria's demise, yet it was comfort tinged with the inevitability of their

own downfall.

**17 They also went down with it to Sheol** to those who were slain by the sword; and **those who were its strength lived in its shade among the nations.**

17 They also went down with it to Sheol to those who were slain by the sword; and those who were its strength lived under its shade among the nations.

17 They also went down with it into Sheol, to those who had been killed violently and to those who had trusted in its strength by living in its shadow among the nations.

17 They also went down into hell with him unto them that be slain with the sword; and they that were his arm, that dwelt under his shadow in the midst of the heathen.

- "They also went down with it to Sheol" - after the physical destruction of Assyria, the topic is now the spiritual dimension, depicting the descent of Assyria and associated nations into Sheol. The nations destroyed along with Assyria died spiritually as well.

- "...*those who were its strength*" - refers to military power, specifically Assyria's army, which had been destroyed.

- "...lived in its shade among the nations" - the various nations (v6) that were under Assyria's influence and protection

**18 "To which among the trees of Eden are you so alike in glory and greatness? Yet you will be brought down with the trees of Eden to the earth beneath; you will lie in the midst of the uncircumcised with those who were killed by the sword. This is Pharaoh and all his hordes!"** declares the Lord GOD."

**18** "To which among the trees of Eden are you thus equal in glory and greatness? Yet you will be brought down with the trees of Eden to the earth beneath; you will lie in the midst of the uncircumcised, with those who were slain by the sword. So is Pharaoh and all his hordes!" declares the Lord GOD."

**18** So tell me now, which of the trees of Eden compares to you in glory or greatness? Nevertheless, you'll be brought down, along with those trees of Eden, to the earth below. You'll lie in the middle of the uncircumcised, with those who have been killed in war. Pharaoh and all his gang will be just like this!" declares the Lord GOD."

**18** To whom art thou thus like in glory and in greatness among the trees of Eden? yet shalt thou be brought down with the trees of Eden unto the nether parts of the earth: thou shalt lie in the midst of the uncircumcised with them that be slain by the sword. This is Pharaoh and all his multitude, saith the Lord GOD.

- After 17 verses on Assyria, the Lord now concludes the fifth oracle by applying the fate described for Assyria directly to Egypt

- "To which among the trees of Eden are you so alike in glory and greatness?" - the question emphasizes that Egypt, like Assyria and the other fallen nations, would face a

similar fate.

- "...you will be brought down with the trees of Eden to the earth beneath" - Egypt's demise would be utterly humiliating and the nation would face a violent end

- "...This is Pharaoh and all his hordes!" - a clear identification of the target of the oracle: Pharaoh Hophra and all his multitudes.