

A Lamentation for Egypt Ezekiel 31-32

Ezekiel 31 – *“In the eleventh year, in the third month on the first day, the word of the Lord came to me:*

² *“Son of man, say to Pharaoh king of Egypt and to his hordes: ‘Who can be compared with you in majesty?*

³ *Consider Assyria, once a cedar in Lebanon, with beautiful branches overshadowing the forest; it towered on high, its top above the thick foliage.*

⁴ *The waters nourished it, deep springs made it grow tall; their streams flowed all around its base and sent their channels to all the trees of the field.*

⁵ *So it towered higher than all the trees of the field; its boughs increased and its branches grew long, spreading because of abundant waters. ⁶ All the birds of the sky nested in its boughs, all the animals of the wild gave birth under its branches; all the great nations lived in its shade. ⁷ It was majestic in beauty, with its spreading boughs, for its roots went down to abundant waters. ⁸ The cedars in the garden of God could not rival it, nor could the junipers equal its boughs, nor could the plane trees compare with its branches—no tree in the garden of God could match its beauty. ⁹ I made it beautiful with abundant branches - the envy of all the trees of Eden in the garden of God.*

¹⁰ *“Therefore this is what the Sovereign Lord says: Because the great cedar towered over the thick foliage, and because it was proud of its height, ¹¹ I gave it into the hands of the ruler of the nations, for him to deal with according to its wickedness. I cast it aside, ¹² and the most ruthless of foreign nations cut it down and left it. Its boughs fell on the mountains and in all the valleys; its branches lay broken in all the ravines of the land. All the nations of the earth came out from under its shade and left it. ¹³ All the birds settled on the fallen tree, and all the wild animals lived among its branches. ¹⁴ Therefore no other trees by the waters are ever to tower proudly on high, lifting their tops above the thick foliage. No other trees so well-watered are ever to reach such a height; they are all destined for death, for the earth below, among mortals who go down to the realm of the dead.*

¹⁵ *“This is what the Sovereign Lord says: On the day it was brought down to the realm of the dead I covered the deep springs with mourning for it; I held back its streams, and its abundant waters were restrained. Because of it I clothed Lebanon with gloom, and all the trees of the field withered away. ¹⁶ I made the nations tremble at the sound of its fall when I brought it down to the realm of the dead to be with those who go down to the pit. Then all the trees of Eden, the choicest and best of Lebanon, the well-watered trees, were consoled in the earth below. ¹⁷ They too, like the great cedar, had gone down to the realm of the dead, to those killed by the sword, along with the armed men who lived in its shade among the nations.*

¹⁸ *“Which of the trees of Eden can be compared with you in splendor and majesty? Yet you, too, will be brought down with the trees of Eden to the earth below; you will lie among the uncircumcised, with those killed by the sword.*

“This is Pharaoh and all his hordes, declares the Sovereign Lord.”

Background Notes

Ezekiel 31 and 32 are the final two chapters of prophecies against the foreign nations surrounding Israel. These chapters contain the fifth, sixth and seventh oracles of judgment on Egypt. In 31:1, 32:1, and 32:17, notice the familiar opening statement that began all seven of the prophetic oracles: *“The word of the Lord came to me saying...”*

Doctrinal Points

1. Egypt would be cut down like the fallen tree of Assyria.

In this chapter, Egypt was likened to a great tree, as was the former Assyrian Empire. The Assyrian tree was described as a great and lofty cedar of Lebanon, higher and loftier than any of the trees of the field (v3-5). The birds that nested in its branches and the animals that lived in its shade represented all the nations under the great Assyrian Empire (v6). When compared to all the trees in the Garden of Eden, the beauty of the tree of Assyria was greater. It was so beautiful that the other trees were jealous of this great tree.

However, because of its pride, the tree of Assyria was cut down (v10). God gave Assyria into the hands of the Babylonians, and its capital city, Nineveh, fell in 612 BC. The “despot” or “ruler of the nations” (v11) was Nebuchadnezzar, who defeated the remaining Assyrian army in 609 BC. The nations that had once been conquered by the Assyrian Empire then lived off her ruin (v12-13).

God said that Assyria was a lesson for other nations that exalted themselves in pride: they would all be cut down and die (v14). The fall of Assyria was like the fall of a grand and beautiful tree in the forest - so much so that all the other trees or nations in the allegory were affected in one way or another (v15-17).

Verse 18 applied the fall of the tree of Assyria to Egypt. Did proud Egypt think she was a greater tree than Assyria? Why, Assyria had successfully invaded Egypt and destroyed Thebes and Upper Egypt (633 BC) - and then the Babylonians had conquered Assyria. Did Egypt dare to think she could go up against the Babylonians? In essence, God said, “Egypt, it’s just a matter of time before you will be brought down with all the other trees who were lifted up with pride. You will lie in the midst of all the other Gentile nations slain by the sword.” Egypt would be cut down like the fallen tree of Assyria.

2. Egypt would be captured like a netted monster.

Ezekiel 32:1-16, *“And it came to pass in the twelfth year, in the twelfth month, on the first day of the month, that the word of the Lord came to me, saying, ² ‘Son of man, take up a lamentation for Pharaoh king of Egypt, and say to him: ‘You are like a young lion among the nations, and you are like a monster in the seas, bursting forth in your rivers, troubling the waters with your feet, and fouling their rivers.*

³ *‘Thus says the Lord God: “I will therefore spread My net over you with a company of many people, and they will draw you up in My net.*

⁴ *Then I will leave you on the land; I will cast you out on the open fields, and cause to settle on you all the birds of the heavens. And with you I will fill the beasts of the whole earth. ⁵ I will lay your flesh on the mountains, and fill the valleys with your carcass.*

⁶ *“I will also water the land with the flow of your blood, even to the mountains; and the riverbeds will be full of you.*

⁷ *When I put out your light, I will cover the heavens, and make its stars dark; I will cover the sun with a cloud, and the moon shall not give her light. ⁸ All the bright lights of the heavens I will make dark over you, and bring darkness upon your land,” says the Lord God.*

“I will also trouble the hearts of many peoples, when I bring your destruction among the nations, into the countries which you have not known. ¹⁰ Yes, I will make many peoples astonished at you, and their kings shall be horribly afraid of you when I brandish My sword before them; and they shall tremble every moment, every man for his own life, in the day of your fall.

¹¹ *‘For thus says the Lord God: “The sword of the king of Babylon shall come upon you. ¹² By the swords of the mighty warriors, all of them the most terrible of the nations, I will cause your multitude to fall. “They shall plunder the pomp of Egypt, and all its multitude shall be destroyed.*

¹³ *Also I will destroy all its animals from beside its great waters; the foot of man shall muddy them no more, nor shall the*

hooves of animals muddy them. ¹⁴ Then I will make their waters clear, and make their rivers run like oil,” says the Lord God. ¹⁵ “When I make the land of Egypt desolate, and the country is destitute of all that once filled it, when I strike all who dwell in it, then they shall know that I am the Lord.

¹⁶ “This is the lamentation with which they shall lament her. The daughters of the nations shall lament her; they shall lament for her, for Egypt, and for all her multitude,” says the Lord God.”

Ezekiel 32 is the sixth prophetic oracle against Egypt. Comparing the date given in 32:1 with the date given in 33:21, Ezekiel gave this prophetic oracle two months after the news of Jerusalem’s fall reached the captives in Babylon. The fact that Jerusalem had fallen to Babylon gave added weight to this prophecy against Egypt. Egypt would not escape the sword of Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonian army.

This prophecy should have been enough to stop the Jewish survivors of the fall of Jerusalem from disobeying the word of the Lord through the prophet Jeremiah, when they foolishly decided to try to escape the threat of Nebuchadnezzar by fleeing to Egypt.

In this prophetic oracle, Egypt was likened to a monster in the seas and rivers. This creature had muddied the waters and fouled the rivers, illustrating the fact that Egypt had disturbed the international scene and disrupted God’s dealings with His people Israel.

Therefore God would capture Egypt like a sea monster in a net. Verse 3: ‘Thus says the Lord God: “I will therefore spread My net over you with a company of many people, and they will draw you up in My net.” Egypt would be dragged up on land and left to die - and become food for the birds of the air and the beasts of the field (v 4-6).

Signs in the heavens would accompany Egypt’s fall, showing that the judgment was from God (v7-8). Other nations would be appalled and troubled for their own safety when they saw God’s judgment on Egypt (v9-10). The sword of Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonian army would be God’s instrument of judgment (v11-12). Egypt’s cattle would be destroyed and the land would be desolate and destitute. The Nile would be undisturbed because the proud and pagan Egyptians would be either killed or scattered (v13-15).

The lamentation or funeral dirge was already prepared. This emphasized that the prophecy was certain and sure. Egypt would be captured like a netted sea monster.

3. Egypt would be consigned to Sheol like an imprisoned terrorist.

Ezekiel 32:17-32 - “It came to pass also in the twelfth year, on the fifteenth day of the month, that the word of the Lord came to me, saying:

¹⁸ “Son of man, wail over the multitude of Egypt, and cast them down to the depths of the earth, her and the daughters of the famous nations, with those who go down to the Pit:

¹⁹ ‘Whom do you surpass in beauty? Go down, be placed with the uncircumcised.’

²⁰ “They shall fall in the midst of those slain by the sword; she is delivered to the sword, drawing her and all her multitudes.

²¹ The strong among the mighty shall speak to him out of the midst of hell with those who help him: ‘They have gone down; they lie with the uncircumcised, slain by the sword.’

²² “Assyria is there, and all her company, with their graves all around her, all of them slain, fallen by the sword. ²³ Her graves are set in the recesses of the Pit, and her company is all around her grave, all of them slain, fallen by the sword, who caused terror in the land of the living.

²⁴ “There is Elam and all her multitude, all around her grave, all of them slain, fallen by the sword, who have gone down uncircumcised to the lower parts of the earth, who caused their terror in the land of the living; Now they bear their shame with those who go down to the Pit. ²⁵ They have set her bed in the midst of the slain, with all her multitude,

With her graves all around it, all of them uncircumcised, slain by the sword; though their terror was caused in the land of the living. Yet they bear their shame with those who go down to the Pit; it was put in the midst of the slain.

²⁶ “There are Meshech and Tubal and all their multitudes, with all their graves around it, all of them uncircumcised, slain by the sword, though they caused their terror in the land of the living. ²⁷ They do not lie with the mighty who are fallen of the uncircumcised, who have gone down to hell with their weapons of war; they have laid their swords under their heads, but their iniquities will be on their bones, because of the terror of the mighty in the land of the living. ²⁸ Yes, you shall be broken in the midst of the uncircumcised, and lie with those slain by the sword.

²⁹ “There is Edom, her kings and all her princes, who despite their might are laid beside those slain by the sword. They shall lie with the uncircumcised, and with those who go down to the Pit.

³⁰ There are the princes of the north, all of them, and all the Sidonians, who have gone down with the slain in shame at the terror which they caused by their might. They lie uncircumcised with those slain by the sword, and bear their shame with those who go down to the Pit.

³¹ “Pharaoh will see them and be comforted over all his multitude. Pharaoh and all his army slain by the sword,” says the Lord God. ³² “For I have caused My terror in the land of the living; and he shall be placed in the midst of the uncircumcised, with those slain by the sword, Pharaoh and all his multitude,” says the Lord God.

The second half of Ezekiel 32 was Ezekiel's seventh and final prophetic oracle against Egypt. It was given two weeks after the sixth oracle (v17). This oracle prophesied that Egypt would be cast down to the Pit, or Sheol, the place of the departed souls of the dead. Egypt would be imprisoned there, with the rest of the proud pagan nations that had already come under the judgment of God. The ancient Egyptians were known for making elaborate preparations for safe passage after death, but God said that they would be broken and forced to lie down in death with all the others who were slain by the sword. Assyria (v22), Elam (v24), Meshech and Tubal (v26), Edom (v29), and the Sidonians (v30) were all there to welcome Pharaoh into the realm of the unbelieving dead.

Notice the recurring phrase in this oracle describing the sin of Egypt and these other pagan nations: “they caused terror in the land of the living” (v23, 24, 25, 26, 27 & 30). What does this say about the fate of terrorists today? Egypt would be consigned to Sheol like an imprisoned terrorist.

Practical Application

Remember - the higher the tree, the greater the fall

This lesson is seen in chapter 31, where Assyria and Egypt were likened to trees that were cut down because they had become proud and haughty. God hates ungodly pride - whether it's the pride of nations or the pride of individuals. Proverbs 16:18 says, *Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall.*

Are you proud? Do you think more highly of yourself than you should? Do you look down on other people?

We are to follow the Lord's example, as seen in Philippians 2:3-8. And remember - the higher the tree, the greater the fall.