

Against Egypt (Chapters 29-32)

As a Doomed Monster (29:1-16)

29:1 In the tenth year, in the tenth month, on (the) twelfth (day) to the month YHWH's Word was / came to me saying: 29:2 Son of Adam / Humanity, set your face(s) against Pharaoh, king of Egypt; and prophesy against him, and against Egypt, all of it. 29:3 Speak! And you shall say, In this way my Lord YHWH spoke: Look at Me, against you, Pharaoh, king of Egypt, the serpent / dragon / sea monster, the great one, the one lying in (the) midst of his streams / canals, who said, My Nile belongs to me, and I, I made (it) for myself! 29:4 And I will give / place hooks in your jaws; and I will cause (the) fish of your streams / canals to stick on your scales. And I will take you up from (the) midst of your streams / canals, and every fish of your streams / canals--on your scales it (the fish) will stick; 29:5 and I will leave you in the desert, you and every fish of your streams / canals; upon (the) surface of the field you will fall; you will not be gathered up, and you will not be collected; to (the) wild animals of the land, and to bird(s) of the heavens, I have given you for food / devouring! 29:6 And all inhabitants of Egypt will know that I (am) YHWH. Because of their being a reed staff to Israel's house: 29:7 when they grasp on you with the hand, you will break; and you will break for them every shoulder. And when they lean upon you, you will be broken; and you will cause all their waists to stand still. 29:8 Therefore, in this way my Lord YHWH spoke: Look at Me, bringing upon you a sword; and I will cut off from you human(s) and animal(s)! 29:9 And the land of Egypt will become a desolation and a waste. And they will know that I (am) YHWH. Because he said, (The) Nile belongs to me, and I made (it). 29:10 Therefore, Look at Me-- against you and against your streams / canals; and I will give / make (the) land of Egypt into a desolated desolation--a devastation from Migdol (to) Sewene, and as far as (the) border of Ethiopia. 29:11 A foot of a human will not cross through it, and an animal's foot will not cross through it; and it will not be dwelled (in for) forty year(s). 29:12 And I will give / make (the) land of Egypt a devastation in (the) midst of lands, devastations; and her cities in (the) midst of cities laid waste. They will be a devastation (for) forty year(s); and I will scatter Egyptians among the nations--and I will scatter / disperse them among the lands. 29:13 Because in this way my Lord YHWH spoke: At (the) end of forty years, I will gather (the) Egyptians from the peoples where they were scattered. 29:14 And I will return Egypt's captivity; and I will return them (to) Pathros-land, upon (the) land of their origin. And they will be there, a lowly kingdom. 29:15 From [compared to] the kingdoms it will be low; and it will not lift itself again over / above the nations; and I will make them small, so as not to rule in / over the nations. 29:16 And it will not again be to Israel's house (the object of) confidence / trust, causing remembrance of iniquity in turning to them, following after them; and they will know that I (am) my Lord YHWH!

Egypt As Payment to Nebuchadnezzar in Place of Tyre (29:17-21)

29:17 And it happened in (the) twenty-seventh year, in the first (month), on (day) one to / of the month, YHWH's Word was / came to me, saying: 29:18 Son of Adam / Humanity, Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon caused his army to serve, a great labor to / at Tyre. Every head

was made bald, and every shoulder was made bare--and there was no pay to him and to his army from Tyre over / for the labor which he / it labored over it. 29:19 Therefore in this way my Lord YHWH spoke: Look at Me--giving to Nebukhadhrettsar, king of Babylon, (the) land of Egypt; and he will carry off its wealth, and spoil its spoil, and plunder its plunder; and it will be pay for his army--29:20 his recompense / payment which he labored in / for it, I have given to him (the) land of Egypt because they worked for Me! (It is) a saying of my Lord YHWH. 29:21 In that day, I will cause to sprout up a horn for Israel's house; and to you, I will give opening of mouth in their midst; and they will know that I (am) YHWH!

29:1¹⁵⁶⁹

1569

Rabbi Fisch comments that “After Tyre comes the prophecy against Egypt extending over **four chapters, 29-32**. Though this first prophecy against Egypt, in the tenth year and tenth month, is dated about seven months earlier than that against Tyre, the latter is placed here first in the [Scroll] because its fulfilment preceded the Egyptian defeat...

“The second prophecy against Egypt is dated twenty-seven years from the accession to the throne by Nebuchadnezzar. The following two [?] prophecies are dated the eleventh year, the year of the destruction of Jerusalem, and two in the twelfth year. The oracle against Egypt is exceedingly fierce and elaborate because of her importance as a world power and her influence upon Israel which was particularly evil...

“Egypt's sin was twofold. Her arrogance was notorious and her role in the history of Israel was that of a deceiver. As a great power, she succeeded in subjugating Israel politically and imposing upon him an alliance which proved to be, in the prophet's words, a *broken reed*, and a calamity in his foreign relations. The alliance was constantly denounced by the prophets not only as a political delusion, but also as a factor in weakening Israel's reliance upon God. This *reed* must therefore be destroyed forever [is this the case? Or is Egypt only predicted to be a minor power in the future? See **verses 13-16**, where YHWH promises to restore the fortunes of Egypt and return them to their home after being scattered for forty years, to be a lowly kingdom]...

“In conclusion the prophet raises a dirge over the doomed Pharaoh, and in graphic language pictures his descent to the nether-world where he joins the company of other fallen tyrants.” (P. 195)

Reimer entitles **29:1-32:32** “Oracles Against Egypt.” He comments that “The seventh and last of the nations to be addressed, Egypt (like Tyre) receives seven oracles, clarified structurally by the date formula that heads all but one of them (**30:1** is the exception)...The Egyptian oracles equal in bulk the rest of the collection in **chapters 25-28**. If the chief interest in Tyre was economic, the leading issue for Egypt is military power. As seen in **chapters 17 and 19**, Egypt was still closely bound up with Judean
(continued...)

¹⁵⁶⁹(...continued)

affairs at this time...The Egyptian king during the period covered by these oracles was Hophra (reigned 589-570 B.C.E.), named in the **Old Testament** only in **Jeremiah 44:30**. His aspirations over this region were instrumental in fomenting Zedekiah's rebellion against Babylon. This accounts both for the belief that Judeans fleeing Babylonian reprisals would find safety in Egypt (**Jeremiah 42-43**) and Ezekiel's condemnation of Egypt's opposition to the Babylonians, who wielded the sword of [YHWH's] wrath." (P. 1544)

Matties states that "*Egypt* had been either a threat or a temptation to Israel for centuries. Isaiah had warned about reliance on Egypt for military help (**Isaiah 30:1-2; 31:1**). Although Pharaoh Hophra intervened while Nebuchadnezzar was besieging Jerusalem (**Jeremiah 37:5-8**), Jeremiah warned against the dangers of fleeing to Egypt (**Jeremiah 42:1-22**) and predicted that Hophra would be captured by Nebuchadnezzar (**Jeremiah 44:30**)." (P. 1199)

Darr comments that "Ezekiel devotes seven oracles to Egypt, the seventh and last nation condemned in **chapters 25-32**...Like Tyre, also the subject of seven denunciations, Egypt elicited Ezekiel's ire in part because of its ability to withstand Babylonian imperial expansion. From the prophet's perspective, Nebuchadnezzar and his forces were Yahweh's instruments of punishment against not only Judah, but also Ammon, Moab, Edom, Philistia, Tyre, Sidon, and Egypt. Egyptian resistance, coupled with its policy of encouraging these other nations to rebel against their Babylonian overlord, defied God's plans for their present and future. In particular, Egyptian promises of military assistance tempted Judah to place its trust in an entity other than Yahweh.

"Nebuchadnezzar's siege against Jerusalem ('in the ninth year,' **24:1**) has been underway for a year; that city will fall approximately six months later...Ezekiel's initial prophecy, a two-part proof saying initiated by the 'summons to a duel' formula ('I am against you'...addresses not only 'Pharaoh, king of Egypt,' but also 'all Egypt' (its land and inhabitants, **verse 2**). Again, this master of metaphor takes up a familiar and apropos trope, depicting Pharaoh as 'the great crocodile' (NRSV, 'dragon'; NIV 'monster') sprawled in the midst of his Nile canals. As in **28:2**, so here, a foreign ruler betrays, by way of an ostensible quotation, a pride so great as to invite Yahweh's punishment (**verse 3b**). The crocodile's sense of power and safety is destroyed in two swift strokes as God, the Mighty Hunter, sets hooks in its jaws, draws it—along with the fish sticking to its scales—from its Nile canals, and hurls it to certain death in the desert. The ultimate goal of Yahweh's successful hunt is that all of Egypt's inhabitants might recognize and acknowledge God's unparalleled power and control of history, which extends beyond Israel to include even this great world empire...

"**Verses 9b-16** consist, first, of further elaboration upon the wholesale devastation of Egypt's land and cities...Remarkably, **verses 13-16** look beyond punishment to speak of the partial restoration of Egypt—a promise nowhere found in Ezekiel's oracles against other foreign nations. Though Yahweh plans to restore Egypt's fortunes, its territory will be reduced to the land of Pathros—that is, Upper, or
(continued...)

¹⁵⁶⁹(...continued)

southern, Egypt (**verse 14**). The ‘most lowly of the kingdoms,’ it will never again be able to tempt Israel with empty promises of aid.” (Pp. 261-262)

Reimer entitles **29:1-16** “Against Pharaoh.” He comments that “The two leading charges against Egypt come out clearly in this initial trio of oracles. **Verses 1-6a** portray the hubris [pride] of Egypt putting itself in the place of [יְהוָה יְהוָה, ‘my Lord YHWH’], while **verses 6b-9a** condemn it for its part in the destruction of Judah. The third section returns to the charge of hubris [pride] and subjects Egypt in a more extended way to the retributive hand of [YHWH]....

“The date of these prophecies in **verse 1**, under which these oracles are gathered, equates to January 587 B.C.E., just after Babylon laid siege to Jerusalem, and after Hophra came to power in Egypt. In several prophecies, including this one, [YHWH] shows Ezekiel what was happening hundreds of miles away (see **Ezekiel 24:2**.” (P. 1544)

Hilmer notes that this date, January 7, 587 B.C.E., is “the sixth date in **Ezekiel** (see **1:2; 8:1; 20:1; 24:1; 26:11**). This is the first of seven oracles against Egypt, all of which are dated, except one (**30:1**). They represent Divine and prophetic anger at Egypt’s actions (or non-actions) at this time.” (P. 1266)

Matties comments on **29:1-16** that “Ezekiel begins by castigating Pharaoh’s pride. Each of the two parts of the oracle begin with Pharaoh’s Divine claim to be creator of the Nile (**verses 3, 9b**.” (P. 1199)

Rabbi Fisch entitles **verses 1-16** “Allegory of Egypt’s Doom and its Interpretation.” He comments that the phrase “in the tenth year” means the tenth year “of the reign of Zedekiah, about seven months before the fall of Jerusalem, 586 B.C.E. There were several prophecies by Ezekiel against Egypt delivered at various times later than the tenth year of the reign of Zedekiah. They are grouped together in one series, though the first of them is dated before that concerning Tyre in **chapter 26**.” (P. 195)

Reimer notes on **verses 1-6a** that “Ezekiel delivered this oracle against Pharaoh king of Egypt, soon after Hophra ascended the throne (in 589 B.C.E.)” (P. 1544)

Darr entitles these verses “The Death of the Great Crocodile.” She comments that “Ezekiel must ‘set his face against’ Pharaoh king of Egypt (the phrase, denoting a hostile gesture, is unique to Ezekiel) ...He then casts Egypt’s king as a menacing creature, ‘the great *tannim*, ‘serpent,’ ‘dragon,’ ‘sea monster.’ In some contexts, this noun designates the primeval chaos dragon defeated by Yahweh (see, e.g., **Job 7:12; Psalm 74:13; Isaiah 51:9**)... Here, most commentators agree, Ezekiel speaks of the Nile crocodile...Suddenly, certain fearsome traits of Pharaoh are foregrounded: he is menacing, voracious, a predator before whom others flee...In a hymn to Thutmose III in which Amun says of Pharaoh’s foes: ‘I
(continued...)

בַּשָּׁנָה הָעֲשִׂירִית בְּעֶשְׂרֵי בְּשָׁנִים עָשָׂר לַחֹדֶשׁ

In the tenth year, in the tenth month, on (the) twelfth (day) to the month

הָיָה דְבַר־יְהוָה אֵלַי לֵאמֹר:

YHWH's Word was / came to me saying:

29:2 בֶּן־אָדָם שִׁים פְּנֶיךָ עַל־פַּרְעֹה מֶלֶךְ מִצְרַיִם

Son of Adam / Humanity, set your face(s) against Pharaoh, king of Egypt;¹⁵⁷⁰

¹⁵⁶⁹(...continued)

have made them see your majesty as a crocodile, Lord of fear in the water, unapproachable...So here Ezekiel quotes a boast of the presumptuous ruler: ‘My Nile is my own; I made it for myself...Ancient readers familiar with the enormous waterworks systems constructed by Egypt’s pharaohs to regulate the inundation of the Nile as it flowed north, and perhaps with Necho’s construction of a canal linking the river with the Red Sea, might interpret Pharaoh’s braggadoccio [boastful or arrogant behavior] in the light of that knowledge...

“With **verse 4**, Ezekiel, in effect, flips the crocodile metaphor over to reveal its soft underbelly. Despite its ostensible security, the creature is vulnerable. With baited hooks, Yahweh will snare the beast, drawing it out of its canals. Herodotus describes a crocodile hunt: ‘The hunter baits a hook with a chine of pork [a squarish area across the backbone between the shoulder blades that holds tender meat], and lets it float into the middle of the river; he himself stays on the bank with a young live pig, which he beats. Hearing the cries of the pig, the crocodile goes after the sound and meets the chine, which it swallows; then the hunters pull the line [**Herodotus 2.70**]...

“The fish sticking to the crocodile’s scales share its fate. The image is a bit bizarre; perhaps the fish represent the Egyptians, or, more specifically, Pharaoh’s army. More likely, they represent neighboring nations which, like Judah, have clung to Egyptian promises of military assistance...

“Such a fate would horrify Egyptian rulers, who expended enormous energy and resources on royal tombs in order to ensure their safe passage into the afterlife... Exploiting the weakness implicit in a familiar image and matching metaphor and mode of punishment with deadly perfection, the prophet depicts YHWH’s utter destruction of a presumptuous monarch.” (Pp. 264-265)

1570

Rabbi Fisch notes the Pharaoh here is “Hophra, named in **Jeremiah 44:30**. He was the fourth king of the twenty-sixth dynasty who reigned from 589 to 570 B.C.E.” (P. 196)

וְהִנָּבֵא עָלָיו

and prophesy against him,

וְעַל-מִצְרַיִם כְּלָהּ:

and against Egypt, all of it.

29:3 דַּבֵּר וְאָמַרְתָּ

Speak! And you shall say,

כֹּה-אָמַר אֲדֹנָי יְהוִה

In this way my Lord YHWH spoke:

הִנְנִי עָלֶיךָ פַּרְעֹה מֶלֶךְ-מִצְרַיִם

Look at Me, against you, Pharaoh, king of Egypt,¹⁵⁷¹

1571

Reimer comments that “The confrontational formula, ‘Behold, I am against you,’ also appears at **28:22**, there addressed to Sidon, the last nation to be dealt with before Egypt (see also **26:3**)...Reimer concludes his comment by stating that “The claim to be the maker of the Nile amounts to arrogation of Divinity (compare Tyre; **Ezekiel 28:2**).” (P. 1544)

“The figure of the dragon takes Ezekiel’s language to the boundary between the natural and the supernatural realms. At one level, this is a symbolic name for the crocodile in the Nile (also **32:2**), but at another level it represents a cosmic creature opposed to the rule of [YHWH] and defeated by Him (e.g., **Psalm 74:13**,

אַתָּה פִּוְרַרְתָּ בְּעֹזֶךָ יָם

You [God] divided (the) sea by Your strength;

שָׁבַרְתָּ רִאשֵׁי תַנִּינִים עַל-הַמַּיִם:

You crushed (the) heads of dragons upon the waters!

Isaiah 27:1,

בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא יִפְקֹד יְהוָה

In that day YHWH will visit (with punishment)

בְּחַרְבּוֹ הַקָּשָׁה וְהַגְּדוֹלָה וְהַחֲזָקָה

with His sword, the hard one, and the great one, and the strong one,

(continued...)

¹⁵⁷¹(...continued)

עַל לְוִיָּתָן נִחַשׁ בָּרֶחַ

upon Leviathan, fleeing / fugitive serpent,

וְעַל לְוִיָּתָן נִחַשׁ עֲקָלְתוֹן

and / even upon Leviathan, crooked / twisting serpent--

וְהָרַג אֶת־הַתַּנִּין אֲשֶׁר בַּיָּם:

and He will kill the dragon that is in the sea!

Oswalt comments on **27:1** that “Ever since the discovery of the Babylonian creation epic with its account of Marduk killing the sea monster Tiamat (see Pritchard, **ANET**, pp. 66-68), it has been clear that there was some reflection of a similar account in this and several other biblical references. The initial enthusiasm to make these a direct borrowing of Babylonian ideas could not be sustained, especially after the finds at Ugarit turned up an account of the defeat of Lotan, a sea monster, much nearer home. A similar story has appeared in Hittite literature (Pritchard, **ANET**, pp. 125-26), so it now seems clear that the myth of the struggle between a high God and a sea / chaos monster was widespread in the ancient Near East...

“That being so, why did they use this terminology at certain points?...Suffice it to say that they were not adopting a mythological world-view...What they were doing was appropriating well-known emotive language into which they could put new meaning...The language of myth could be bent to new purposes, as here, where Isaiah, in need of strong imagery to cap his vision of [YHWH’s] victory over sin, oppression, and death, seizes on the Leviathan story and makes it say something much more profound than it had ever said before...

“This verse is saying the same thing then as **24:21-23**, although in different words. [YHWH] is the sole Sovereign of the universe, and while evil and destruction now seem to threaten the principles of justice upon which His order is founded, they will not prevail. [YHWH] will triumph and those who have kept faith in Him through dark days will triumph with Him. But the true monster which must be destroyed, the one before which [YHWH’s] people find themselves helpless, is not some primordial chaos; it is the monster of moral evil. That, too, [YHWH] will destroy, and His people may await that day with joy.” (Pp. 490-91)

Do you agree with Oswalt? Is Isaiah, in his prophetic message, taking up the language of Israel’s Near-Eastern neighbors, and using it with reference to YHWH instead of the Near-Eastern Gods such as Baal and Ahura Mazda and Marduk? And is not this usage puzzling to the average reader of Isaiah’s message?

Isaiah 51:9,

עוֹרֵי עוֹרֵי

Raise up! Raise up! / Awake! Awake!

(continued...)

¹⁵⁷¹(...continued)

לְבַשְׂי-עוֹ זְרוּעַ יְהוָה

Dress (yourself with) strength, arm of YHWH!

עוֹרֵי כְּיָמֵי קָדְמָה

Awake as (in) days of old / ancient time,

דְּרוֹת עוֹלָמִים

(in) generations of long-lasting (past) times!

הֲלוֹא אַתְּ הִיא

Are You not she,

הַמַּחְצֶבֶת רַהַב

the one cutting Rahab in pieces,

מַחֹלְלֵת תַּנְיִן:

(the) One piercing a Dragon?

We agree with Oswalt’s comment that “Most scholars today are in agreement that while the exodus events are in the center of the writer’s thinking, they are not by any means all that is there. *Rahab* is clearly a term for Egypt (compare **30:7**; and **Psalm 87:4**, where Rahab and Babylon are paired); so also the *monster* (or ‘dragon’) is a term for Pharaoh (**Ezekiel 29:3**)...But it is also clear that those terms are not limited to those historical referents. As is known from Ugaritic studies, *the twisting monster* is a figure in the struggles of Baal with the God of the sea, Yam, as is ‘Leviathan,’ which is equated with the monster in **Isaiah 27:1**. Given these facts, and the evidence that the myth of the struggle of the Gods with the sea monster was known in one form or another all over the ancient Near East, one has reason to believe that Isaiah is here, as in **27:1**, utilizing this acquaintance among the people for his own purposes.” (P. 341)

North entitles **verses 9-11** “History and Myth.” He comments that “The original associations of ‘Rahab, the sea-monster, the sea’ (in Ugaritic the God *Yam*) and ‘the great deep,’ were with the creation-myth. [See **Job 7:12**; **9:13**; **26:12**; **Psalm 74:13**; **89:10-11**; **Isaiah 27:1**]...‘Rahab,’ ‘the sea-monster,’ ‘the sea,’ and ‘the deep’ are all synonyms for the original chaos. The fullest form of the creation-myth is the Babylonian [Enuma Elish], in which [the God] Marduk slew Tiamat, ‘split her like a shell-fish into two parts...and with one half made a covering...over the earth, to keep the waters of the original chaos from deluging the inhabited world...If **verse 9b** refers to the creation, **verse 10** refers to the exodus and the deliverance at the Red Sea...Rahab is Egypt in **Psalm 87:4**...and **Isaiah 30:7**...

“The Hebrews took the fragments from the creation-myth, like broken pieces of stained glass, and used them to embellish the story of the exodus. They ‘historicized’ the myth, and it is broadly true to say that [YHWH’s] revelation in history was His answer to the human need that had found expression in what, to us, is crude mythology. Passages like the present [**Isaiah 51:9-11**] and **Psalm 74:12-17** refer equally to creation and redemption.” (Pp. 211-12)

הַתַּנִּיִּם הַגְּדוֹל

the serpent / dragon / sea monster, the great one,¹⁵⁷²

הָרֹבֵץ בְּתוֹךְ יְאֵרָיו

the one lying in (the) midst of his streams / canals,

אֲשֶׁר אָמַר

who said,

לִי יְאֵרֵי

My Nile belongs to me,

וְאֲנִי עָשִׂיתִנִּי:

and I, I made (it) for myself!¹⁵⁷³

1572

Here Ezekiel's allegory begins. Ezekiel call Pharaoh הַתַּנִּיִּם הַגְּדוֹל, **hattanniym haggadhol**, "the great serpent / dragon / sea monster." It would be a mistake to take this as meant literally. Rather, it is meant metaphorically. As H. Niehr states in his article in **Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament** XV, pp. 726-31, "The metaphorical use of *tannin* results in an historicization that treats it as a contemporary political power rather than a primordial being [as is done in usage for creation and eschatology]. Thus *tannin* can serve as a metaphor for Pharaoh, who sprawls in the Nile like a crocodile and claims to have made it himself (**Ezekiel 29:3**)." (P. 730)

Rabbi Fisch comments that *the great dragon* is "the crocodile. The river Nile, which overflowed its banks periodically and brought fertility to the land, was the source of Egypt's prosperity and pride. The arrogant Pharaoh personified his country as did the prince of Tyre." (P. 196)

1573

Proud Pharaoh Hophra (589-570 B.C.E. see **Jeremiah 44:30**) claims that "The Nile is mine, and I made it!" But the fact is that Egypt and Pharaoh are both the gift of the Nile, and of the Creator God YHWH who made the Nile! YHWH will send Egypt into 40 years of exile, and then restore them--but Egypt will be a lowly kingdom, just as weak and undependable as she has proven to be to Judah!

Rabbi Fisch notes that "Like the prince of Tyre, Pharaoh thought of himself as more than human, the creator of the strength and productivity of Egypt. The exalted position which his country occupied in the world at that time was due to his exceptional powers." (P. 196)

(continued...)

29:4 וְנָתַתִּי (חַחִיִּים) [חַחִים] בְּלַחְיֶיךָ

And I will give / place hooks¹⁵⁷⁴ in your jaws;¹⁵⁷⁵

וְהִדְבַקְתִּי דְגַת־יְאֲרֵיךָ בְּקַשְׁשֵׁיֶיךָ

and I will cause (the) fish of your streams / canals to stick on your scales.¹⁵⁷⁶

וְהֵעַלִיתִיךָ מִתּוֹךְ יְאֲרֵיךָ

And I will take you up from (the) midst of your streams / canals,

וְאֵת כָּל־דְגַת יְאֲרֵיךָ

and every fish of your streams / canals--

¹⁵⁷³(...continued)

So, at least, Pharaoh thought. Hilmer comments that these are the things Pharaoh says. “Boasts inscribed on Egyptian monuments (such as in Shelley’s ‘Ozymandias’) had become proverbial.” (P. 1266)

¹⁵⁷⁴

The Masoretes offer two readings: first, the *kethibh*, “what is written,” קָחִיִּים; and second, the *qere*, “to be read,” קָחִים, a correction of the original Hebrew text’s spelling.

¹⁵⁷⁵

Rabbi Fisch notes that “As the crocodile is captured and drawn by hooks from the river, so will Egypt be defeated by her enemies and lose the wealth yielded by her river.” (P. 196) Compare **Ezekiel 19:4**, where Ezekiel depicts the young lion of Israel being caught in a pit, and taken “with hooks to the land of Egypt.”

¹⁵⁷⁶

Rabbi Fisch comments that “the fishes which adhere to the scales of the crocodile typify the whole nation. Both king and people will perish.” (P. 196)

Hilmer thinks the fish of Pharaoh’s streams is a metaphor for “Egypt’s conquered territories or mercenaries.” (P. 1266)

Matties states that “[YHWH] captures the monster along with the fish (Pharaoh and his people), drags them out of the Nile, and throws them out to become food for other creatures (**verses 4-5**).” (P. 1199)

בְּקִשְׁתֶּיךָ תִּדְבֶק:

on your scales it (the fish) will stick;

29:5 וְנִטְשְׁתִּיךָ הַמִּדְבָּרָה

and I will leave you in the desert,¹⁵⁷⁷

אוֹתְךָ וְאֵת כָּל־דְּגַת יְאֵרֶיךָ

you and every fish of your streams / canals;

עַל־פְּנֵי הַשָּׂדֶה תִּפּוֹל

upon (the) surface of the field you will fall;

לֹא תִאָּסַף וְלֹא תִקְבָּץ

you will not be gathered up, and you will not be collected;¹⁵⁷⁸

לְחַיֵּי הָאָרֶץ וְלְעוֹף הַשָּׁמַיִם

to (the) wild animals of the land, and to bird(s) of the heavens,

נִתַּתִּיךָ לְאֹכְלָהּ:

I have given you for food / devouring!¹⁵⁷⁹

1577

Rabbi Fisch comments that “Dry land spells certain death for the crocodile and fishes cast upon it out of the water. Driven away from the Nile, the Egyptian people will be destroyed.” (P. 197)

1578

Rabbi Fisch comments that “The fallen will not be given burial as human dignity requires, but will lie about abandoned and neglected to become a prey to the beasts and birds of prey (compare **Ezekiel 31:13** and **39:17-19**).” (P. 197)

1579

Rabbi Fisch comments that “The meaning is probably that the population will be dispersed and perish in foreign lands, or the Egyptian warriors will fall in battle there.” (P. 214)

Hilmer comments that being given to the beasts of the field as food would be “particularly frustrating to the pharaoh’s great hopes for an afterlife, as symbolized by the pyramids and expressed in the Egyptian ‘Book of the Dead.’”

(continued...)

29:6 וַיִּדְעוּ כָּל-יֹשְׁבֵי מִצְרַיִם

And all inhabitants of Egypt will know

כִּי אֲנִי יְהוָה

that I (am) YHWH.

יַעַן הָיוּתְּם מְשַׁעֲנֵת קִנְיָה לְבַיִת יִשְׂרָאֵל:

Because of their being a reed staff to Israel's house.¹⁵⁸⁰

¹⁵⁷⁹(...continued)

“The Book of the Dead is an ancient Egyptian funerary text generally written on papyrus and used from the beginning of the New Kingdom (around 1550 B.C.E.) to around 50 B.C.E. The original Egyptian name for the text...is translated as Book of Coming Forth by Day or Book of Emerging Forth into the Light. ‘Book’ is the closest term to describe the loose collection of texts consisting of a number of magic spells intended to assist a dead person's journey through the Duat, or underworld, and into the afterlife and written by many priests over a period of about 1,000 years.

“The Book of the Dead, which was placed in the coffin or burial chamber of the deceased, was part of a tradition of funerary texts which includes the earlier Pyramid Texts and Coffin Texts, which were painted onto objects, not written on papyrus. Some of the spells included in the Book were drawn from these older works and date to the 3rd millennium B.C.E. Other spells were composed later in Egyptian history, dating to the Third Intermediate Period (11th to 7th centuries B.C.E.). A number of the spells which make up the Book continued to be separately inscribed on tomb walls and sarcophagi, as the spells from which they originated always had been.

“There was no single or canonical Book of the Dead. The surviving papyri contain a varying selection of religious and magical texts and vary considerably in their illustration. Some people seem to have commissioned their own copies of the Book of the Dead, perhaps choosing the spells they thought most vital in their own progression to the afterlife. The **Book of the Dead** was most commonly written in hieroglyphic or hieratic script on a papyrus scroll, and often illustrated with vignettes depicting the deceased and their journey into the afterlife.

“The finest example we have of the Egyptian **Book of the Dead** in antiquity is the Papyrus of Ani. Ani was an Egyptian scribe. It was discovered by Sir E. A. Wallis Budge in 1888 and was taken to the British Museum, where it currently resides.” (Wikipedia, 9/9/2020) See this entire lengthy and very informative article.

¹⁵⁸⁰(...continued)

Rabbi Fisch states that “*a staff of reed*...which provides no support and breaks when one leans upon it. Egypt was described by the officer of Sennacherib, king of Assyria, as a bruised reed...whereon if a man lean, it will go in to his hand, and pierce it (**Isaiah 36:6**). She proved untrustworthy as an ally of Israel.” (P. 197)

Reimer comments on **29:6b-9a** that “The second accusation is cast in the familiar ‘because... therefore’ (Hebrew *ya’an...lakhen*) form seen often in **Ezekiel**. A river-related metaphor is again used; this time, however, Egypt is the ‘staff of reed’ (i.e. a useless staff made from a flimsy reed) that treacherously fails to give support. In all likelihood this metaphor relates to the events narrated in **Jeremiah 37:5-10**,

5 וְחֵיל פְּרָעָה יֵצֵא מִמִּצְרַיִם

And Pharaoh’s army went forth from Egypt.

וַיִּשְׁמְעוּ הַכַּשְׂדִּים עַל-יְרוּשָׁלַם אֶת-שִׁמְעָם

And the Chaldeans heard, the ones besieging against Jerusalem, their report,

וַיֵּעָלוּ מֵעַל יְרוּשָׁלַם:

and they went up / withdrew from against Jerusalem.

6 וַיְהִי דְבַר-יְהוָה אֶל-יִרְמְיָהוּ הַנָּבִיא לֵאמֹר:

And YHWH’s word was / came to Jeremiah the prophet, saying:

7 כֹּה-אָמַר יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל

In this way YHWH God of Israel spoke:

כֹּה תֹאמְרוּ אֶל-מֶלֶךְ יְהוּדָה

In this way you shall speak to (the) king of Judah,

הַשְּׁלַח אֶתְכֶם אֵלַי לְדַרְשָׁנִי

the one sending you to Me to inquire of Me:

הֲנֵהוּ חֵיל פְּרָעָה הַיֵּצֵא לָכֶם לְעֹזְרָה

Look–Pharaoh’s army, the one going forth to you people for help,

שׁוֹב לְאַרְצוֹ מִצְרַיִם:

is returning to its land Egypt!

8 וְשָׁבוּ הַכַּשְׂדִּים וְנִלְחָמוּ עַל-הָעִיר הַזֹּאת

And the Chaldeans will return, and will fight upon / against this city;

וְלָכְדָהּ וְשָׂרְפָהּ בָּאֵשׁ:

and they will capture it, and will burn it with the fire!

9 כֹּה אָמַר יְהוָה

In this way YHWH spoke:

(continued...)

¹⁵⁸⁰(...continued)

אַל־תִּשְׂאוּ נִפְשֵׁיכֶם לֵאמֹר

Do not lift up your innermost-beings, saying,

הֲלֹךְ יֵלְכוּ מֵעַלֵינוּ הַפְּשָׁדִים

The Chaldeans will certainly go away from upon / against us,

כִּי־לֹא יֵלְכוּ:

because they will not go away!

10 כִּי אִם־הִכִּיתֶם כָּל־חֵיל פְּשָׁדִים

Because if you struck all (the) army of the Chaldeans

הַנִּלְחָמִים אִתְּכֶם

the ones fighting with you people,

וְנִשְׂאָרוּ בָּם אֲנָשִׁים מְדַקְרִים

and there were left remaining among them wounded / pierced men,

אִישׁ בְּאֹהֶלוֹ

each man in his tent,

יָקוּמוּ וְיִשְׂרְפוּ אֶת־הָעִיר הַזֹּאת בְּאֵשׁ:

they would rise up and would burn this city with the fire!

and echoes the taunt hurled against Hezekiah's Jerusalem by the Assyrians (**2 Kings 18:21**,

21 עֵתָה הִנֵּה בַטַּחַת לְךָ

Now look—you trusted for yourself

עַל־מִשְׁעֶנֶת הַקִּנָּה הַרְצוּץ הַזֶּה

upon a staff--this crushed reed--

עַל־מִצְרַיִם

upon Egypt--

אֲשֶׁר יִסְמְךָ אִישׁ עָלָיו

which (if) a man supports himself upon it,

וּבֹא בְכַפּוֹ וְנִקְבָהּ

and it will come into his hand and pierce it!

כִּן פִּרְעֹה מֶלֶךְ־מִצְרַיִם

So it is with Pharaoh, king of Egypt / Egyptians,

לְכָל־הַבֹּטְחִים עָלָיו:

to all those trusting in him!." (P. 1544)

Hilmer notes that "Hophra briefly but unsuccessfully diverted the Babylonians from laying siege to Jerusalem." (P. 1267)

29:7 בְּחַפְזָם בְּךָ (בְּכַפְךָ) [בְּכַף]

when they grasp on you with the hand,¹⁵⁸¹

תִּרְוֹץ

you will break;

וּבְקַעַתָּ לָהֶם כָּל-כַּתְּף

and you will break for them every shoulder.¹⁵⁸²

וּבְהִשָּׁעֲנוּ עָלֶיךָ

And when they lean upon you,

תִּשְׁבֹּר

you will be broken;

וְהַעֲמַדְתָּ לָהֶם כָּל-מִתְנִיָּים:

and you will cause all their waists to stand still.¹⁵⁸³

1581

The Masoretes offer two readings: first, the *kethibh*, “what is written,” בְּכַפְךָ, “with your hand”; and second, the *qere*, “to be read,” בְּכַף, “with the hand.”

1582

Rabbi Fisch’s translation has “rend all their shoulders,” and he comments that “Anyone who depends upon Egypt find the support giving way so that he falls and dislocates his shoulder.” (P. 197)

1583

Translations of the last line of **verse 7** vary:

King James, “and madest all their loins to be at a stand.”

Tanakh, “And make all their loins unsteady.”

New Revised Standard, “and made all their legs unsteady.”

New International, “and their backs were wrenched.”

New Jerusalem, “making all their limbs give way.”

Rahlf’s, καὶ συνέκλασας αὐτῶν πᾶσαν ὀσφύν, “and you shattered every loin of theirs.”

(continued...)

29:8 לָכֵן כֹּה אָמַר יְהוָה אֲדַנִּי יְהוָה

Therefore, in this way my Lord YHWH spoke.¹⁵⁸⁴

הֲנִי מְבִיא עָלֶיךָ חֶרֶב

Look at Me, bringing upon you a sword,¹⁵⁸⁵

¹⁵⁸³(...continued)

We do not understand how “causing to stand” can mean “make unsteady,” or “wrenched,” or “give way,” or “shatter.” With our translation we understand the statement to mean that whereas they were leaning on you as they walked, with you being broken, they stopped walking, and stood still. What do you think?

Rabbi Fisch states that “a person who leans upon another adopts a bent posture. In the case of Egypt, anybody leaning upon her soon feels the necessity to stand erect. The root of the verb is *amad*; and Kimchi mentions that some explain the verb as though it were from the root *ma’ad* (compare *make their loins continually to totter, ham’ad, Psalm 49:24*), while Rashi remarks that some emend the verb accordingly. They both reject the suggested rendering.” (P. 197)

Darr comments that here again, “Ezekiel takes up a conventional metaphor: Egypt is a ‘staff of reed’ to the house of Israel. Because reeds are hollow, those foolish enough to choose them as walking sticks or crutches risk bodily injury. So Judah, by leaning on Egypt, misplaces its trust to its harm...He who leans on Egypt falls flat on his face!...

“The ‘Egypt is a staff of reed’ metaphor also functions succinctly, and with rhetorical punch, to reveal a truth basic to the prophet’s message: God alone must be the ultimate object of our faith and trust. Ezekiel insists with unrivaled severity that Yahweh’s punishment of Israel (and of its culpable neighbors) can no longer be avoided. To his mind, the Babylonian aggressors are God’s instruments of judgment; resort to other nations in hopes of avoiding that punishment betrays both a failure to accept the fate that Israel has earned, and a fundamental refusal to acknowledge God’s sovereignty as manifested in history. Ezekiel insists that trust in Yahweh offers no detour around the catastrophic events bearing down upon Judah. God’s people must go through judgment, for only that path offers hope for its future. Israel must cling to God, even as Yahweh orchestrates its undoing.” (Pp. 265-267)

¹⁵⁸⁴

Rabbi Fisch states that here in **verse 8** “The imagery is now translated into plain language.” (P. 197)

¹⁵⁸⁵

Hilmer comments the sword is that of Nebuchadnezzar—compare **Ezekiel 21:3**, where it is a fire instead of a sword. He adds that “For the entire expression, which is not found in other prophetic
(continued...)

וְהִכַּרְתִּי מִמֶּךָ אָדָם וּבְהֵמָה:

and I will cut off from you human(s) and animal(s)!

29:9¹⁵⁸⁶ וְהִיְתָה אֶרֶץ-מִצְרַיִם לְשִׁמְמָה וְחָרְבָה

And the land of Egypt will become a desolation and a waste.

וְיָדְעוּ כִּי־אֲנִי יְהוָה

And they will know that I (am) YHWH.

יַעַן אָמַר יְאֵר לִי וְאֲנִי עָשִׂיתִי:

Because he said, (The) Nile belongs to me, and I made (it).¹⁵⁸⁷

¹⁵⁸⁵(...continued)

[Scroll]s, see **Ezekiel 6:3; 11:8; 14:17; 33:2** (all of which mention YHWH's bringing a sword against a land). Also see **Leviticus 26:25**,

25 וְהִבֵּאתִי עֲלֵיכֶם חֶרֶב

And I will bring upon you people a sword,

נִקְמַת נִקְמַת־בְּרִית

taking vengeance, (the) covenant's vengeance;

וְנִאֲסַפְתֶּם אֶל־עָרֵיכֶם

and you will be gathered into your cities,

וְשִׁלַּחְתִּי דָבָר בְּתוֹכְכֶם

and I will send a plague into your midst—

וְנִתַּתֶּם בְּיַד־אֹיֵב:

and you will be given into an enemy's hand.” (P. 1267)

We think Ezekiel has gotten his language from **Leviticus**, the priestly document.

¹⁵⁸⁶

Matties comments on **verses 9b-16** that “[YHWH] announces judgment against the whole land, declaring it a wasteland from its northern (Migdol) to southern (Syene) borders and scattering its people for one generation (**verses 9b-12**; on the forty years see also **Numbers 14:34**). The restoration of Egypt will allow for a small, insignificant entity located in the far south (Pathros), far away from the grandeur and power located in the delta region (**verses 13-15**), and unable to become a temptation to Israel (**verse 16a**).” (P. 1199)

¹⁵⁸⁷

(continued...)

29:10¹⁵⁸⁸ לִכְנֹן הִנְנִי אֵלֶיךָ וְאֶל-יְאֻרֵיךָ

Therefore, Look at Me—against you and against your streams / canals;

וְנָתַתִּי אֶת-אֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם לְחֶרְבוֹת חָרָב

and I will give / make (the) land of Egypt into a desolated desolation--

שְׁמֹמָה מִמִּגְדֹּל סוּנָה

a devastation from Migdol¹⁵⁸⁹ (to) Sewene,¹⁵⁹⁰

¹⁵⁸⁷(...continued)

Rabbi Fisch comments that “Pride is an offence to God and punished by Him with humiliation.” (P. 198)

Reimer comments on **29:9b-6** that it is “A brief ‘because’ section (**verse 9b**) that repeats the accusation against Egypt in **verse 3** before a much longer and literal judgment speech (**verses 10-16**)...

“The judgment has typical elements in **verses 10-12** that coincide with those leveled against Israel and Judah themselves. That Egypt should also be favored with restoration (**verses 13-16**) is more surprising, but not unparalleled (see **Jeremiah 46:26**; compare **Jeremiah 48:47; 49:6, 39**). Restored Egypt will, however, be cured of its hubris [pride] (**Ezekiel 29:14-15**)...

Isaiah describes a future even farther off, with the Egyptians brought to knowing the true God (**Isaiah 19:18-25**).” (Pp. 1544-45) Yes, indeed!

1588

Reimer comments on **29:10-11** that “The desolation of Egypt, which lasts forty years, strikes at the assumption that the annual inundations of the Nile that supported Egypt guaranteed its perpetual well-being...

“The location of Migdol is unknown, but together with Syene (Aswan) it bounds Egypt north and south. Cush is the region roughly corresponding to modern Ethiopia...

“Most interpreters think this ‘forty years’ does not refer to any specific period of time but is a symbolic number showing the parallel to the wandering of Israel in the wilderness for 40 years, or just symbolizing the completeness of [YHWH’s] judgment. Some interpreters have taken it to refer to the period when Egypt was under Babylonian rule from 568 to 525 B.C.E. (see **verse 19**).” (P. 1545)

1589

(continued...)

וְעַד־גְּבוּל כּוּשׁ:

and as far as (the) border of Ethiopia.¹⁵⁹¹

29:11 לֹא תַעֲבֹר־בָּהּ רֶגֶל אָדָם

A foot of a human will not cross through it,

וְרֶגֶל בְּהֵמָה לֹא תַעֲבֹר־בָּהּ

and an animal's foot will not cross through it,¹⁵⁹²

וְלֹא תִשָּׁב אַרְבָּעִים שָׁנָה:

and it will not be dwelled (in for) forty year(s).¹⁵⁹³

¹⁵⁸⁹(...continued)

Hilmer states that the location of Migdol is unknown, but it was “probably in northern Egypt (see **Jeremiah 44:1; 46:14** [both of which mention Migdol along with Tahpenes and Memphis / Noph, cities in Pathros, northern Egypt]).” (P. 1267)

¹⁵⁹⁰

Hilmer states that “Aswan is a town in southern Egypt,” and that the phrase “From Midgol to Aswan [/ Syene]” (see **Ezekiel 30:6**) “probably indicated all Egypt, just as ‘from Dan to Beersheba’ meant all Israel.” (P. 1267)

¹⁵⁹¹

Rabbi Fisch comments that “The whole of the country will be involved in the punishment. *Migdol*, meaning ‘a tower,’ was a frontier fortress at the northeast corner of Lower Egypt (compare **Exodus 14:2; Jeremiah 44:1**), about twelve miles south of Pelusium, on the northern border. *Syene*, or *Seweneh*, now known as Assouan, is opposite Migdol at the extreme south, on the frontier of Ethiopia.” (P. 198)

¹⁵⁹²

Rabbi Fisch comments that “Even animals will desert the land owing to the lack of pasture.” (P. 198)

¹⁵⁹³

Rabbi Fisch says to compare **Ezekiel 4:6**, “where the desolation of Judea is predicted for a similar period. The recovery of Egypt was foretold by other prophets (compare **Isaiah 19:24; Jeremiah 46:26**). The Midrash states that famine was decreed for Egypt in the time of Joseph to last forty-two

(continued...)

29:12 וְנָתַתִּי אֶת־אֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם שְׁמֹמָה

And I will give / make (the) land of Egypt a devastation

בְּתוֹךְ אַרְצוֹת נְשֹׁמוֹת

in (the) midst of lands, devastations;

וְעָרֶיהָ בְּתוֹךְ עָרִים מְחֻרְבוֹת

and her cities in (the) midst of cities laid waste.¹⁵⁹⁴

תְּהִיִן שְׁמֹמָה אַרְבַּעִים שָׁנָה

They will be a devastation (for) forty year(s);

וְהִפְצַתִּי אֶת־מִצְרַיִם בְּגוֹיִם

and I will scatter Egyptians among the nations--

וְזָרִיתִים בְּאַרְצוֹת:

and I will scatter / disperse them among the lands.

29:13 כִּי כֹה אָמַר אֲדֹנָי יְהוִה

Because in this way my Lord YHWH spoke:

¹⁵⁹³(...continued)

years; but with the coming of Jacob to the country, after two years, it ended prematurely. Now the Egyptians would have to suffer the balance of forty years.” (P. 198)

Hilmer states that the phrase “forty years” is “sometimes used to signify a long and difficult period (compare **Ezekiel 4:6** [where Ezekiel is told by YHWH to lie on his side for 40 days, with each day symbolizing a year].” (P. 1267)

What do you think? Was this prophecy of Ezekiel fulfilled literally? Is there any proof of that?

¹⁵⁹⁴

Rabbi Fisch comments that “The state of desolation in Egypt will be so extreme that it will appear patently so even in comparison with other lands which have been ravaged by an invading army.” (P. 198)

מִקֵּץ אַרְבָּעִים שָׁנָה

At (the) end of forty years,¹⁵⁹⁵

אֶקְבֹּץ אֶת־מִצְרַיִם

I will gather (the) Egyptians

מִן־הָעַמִּים אֲשֶׁר־נִפְצוּ שָׁמָּה:

from the peoples where they were scattered.

29:14 וְשִׁבַּתִּי אֶת־שְׁבוֹת מִצְרַיִם

And I will return Egypt's captivity;¹⁵⁹⁶

וְהִשְׁבַּתִּי אֹתָם אֶרֶץ פַּתְרוֹס

and I will return them (to) Pathros-land,¹⁵⁹⁷

עַל־אֶרֶץ מְכוֹרְתָם

upon (the) land of their origin.

1595

Rabbi Fisch comments that “After forty years Egypt will be restored, though only to rank as a weak kingdom with its former pride shattered. The restoration at the end of the period named probably coincides with the decline of the Babylonian empire.” (Pp. 198-99)

1596

See end-note 7 for YHWH as the Returner of Captivities and Restorer of Fortunes. Compare **Ezekiel 16:53**.

1597

Rabbi Fisch comments that “Pathros, meaning ‘south land,’ was the name of Upper [Southern] Egypt. Herodotus considered it to be the source from which Egyptian rule developed.” (P. 199)

Reimer comments that “Ancient Egyptian tradition located its national origins in the region of the Upper [Southern] Nile where Pathros is located. The reference suggests that Ezekiel was well informed of Egyptian lore. Jewish mercenaries had been in the region for many years. Judean refugees fled there with Jeremiah (**Jeremiah 44:1, 15**).” (P. 1545)

וְהָיוּ שָׁם מִמְּלָכָה שְׁפֹלָה:

And they will be there, a lowly kingdom.¹⁵⁹⁸

29:15 מִן־הַמְּלָכוֹת תִּהְיֶה שְׁפֹלָה

From [compared to] the kingdoms it will be low;

וְלֹא־תִתְנַשֵּׂא עוֹד עַל־הַגּוֹיִם

and it will not lift itself again over / above the nations;¹⁵⁹⁹

וְהִמְעַטְתִּים לְבִלְתִּי רָדוֹת בַּגּוֹיִם:

and I will make them small, so as not to rule in / over the nations.

29:16 וְלֹא יִהְיֶה־עוֹד לְבַיִת יִשְׂרָאֵל לְמִבְטָח

And it will not again be to Israel's house (the object of) confidence / trust,¹⁶⁰⁰

מִזְכִּיר עוֹן בְּפְנֹתֵם אַחֲרֵיהֶם

causing remembrance of iniquity in turning to them, following after them;¹⁶⁰¹

1598

Rabbi Fisch comments that this means “small in size and humble in status.” (P. 199)

1599

Rabbi Fisch comments that “Egypt will become not merely a lowly kingdom (**verse 14**), but inferior to all other nations.” (P. 199)

Reimer puts it differently: “They will never again rule over the nations.’ Egypt never rebuilt the empire it once had.” (P. 1545)

1600

Rabbi Fisch comments that “In her weakened and lowly condition she will no more be able to seduce Israel to turn to her for help.” (P. 199)

1601

Rabbi Fisch comments that “Israel’s reliance upon Egypt instead of trusting in God was an offence in His sight. For the phrase, compare **Ezekiel 21:28; Numbers 5:15.**” (P. 199)

וִידְעוּ כִּי אֲנִי אֲדֹנָי יְהוָה:

and they will know that I (am) my Lord YHWH!¹⁶⁰²

Egypt As Payment to Nebuchadnezzar in Place of Tyre (29:17-21)¹⁶⁰³

1602

This is a strange statement. It is as if YHWH is depicted as saying “I am the One Ezekiel calls ‘My Lord YHWH.’”

Darr reflects over **29:13-16** that “The modern world is far larger than Ezekiel knew, but it is also smaller. What happens, even on the other side of the planet, can have global implications. When internecine [destructive to both sides in a conflict] feuds foment and larger nations prey upon smaller ones, we cannot simply presuppose that the battles will go against God’s foes—that some live, and others die, according to God’s plan. Even as, in faith, we commend ourselves and our world into the Lord’s Hands, we are commissioned to seek justice, to weigh competing claims, and to act in ways that testify to a bed-rock belief that God loves this world and takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but longs rather that they (we) should turn from evil and live (**Ezekiel 18:23**).” (P. 268)

1603

This is the latest dated message in **Ezekiel**--April 26, 571 B.C.E. Nebuchadnezzar had besieged Tyre for fifteen years, and during that time every head was rubbed bare and every shoulder was made raw--probably from the wearing of helmets and the bearing of the heavy burdens involved in laying siege to Tyre. YHWH again proclaims His sovereignty over the nations in this message. He is giving Nebuchadnezzar Egypt as a reward for his long, hard fought campaign against Tyre.

What do you make of this? Nebuchadnezzar and Babylon were the earthly power that would soon destroy Jerusalem and its temple, murdering thousands of Judeans, and carrying many into captivity in Babylon. And here Yahweh is depicted as caring for Nebuchadnezzar’s soldiers, rewarding them for their long siege of Tyre by giving them Egypt. What kind of God is this? Is He the God of Israel, or the God of Babylon? Will He soon reward the Babylonian soldiers for their destruction of Jerusalem?

Hilmer comments that beginning here is “the second oracle against Egypt (see **verse 1**)...It is also the seventh date in **Ezekiel** (see **29:1; 1:2; 8:1; 20:12; 24:1; 26:1**) and the latest date given in the [**Scroll**]. Since the remaining dated oracles are in more or less chronological order, the date is mentioned here probably because of the subject matter (Egypt).” (P. 1267)

29:17 וַיְהִי בְעֶשְׂרִים וְשֶׁבַע שָׁנָה

And it happened in (the) twenty-seventh year,¹⁶⁰⁴

בְּרֵאשִׁיטוֹן בְּאַחַד לַחֹדֶשׁ

In the first (month), on (day) one to / of the month,

הָיָה דְבַר־יְהוָה אֵלַי לֵאמֹר:

YHWH's word was / came to me, saying:

29:18¹⁶⁰⁵ בֶּן־אָדָם נְבוּכַדְרֶאֱצַר מֶלֶךְ־בָּבֶל

Son of Adam / Humanity, Nebhukhadhrettsar,¹⁶⁰⁶ king of Babylon

1604

Rabbi Fisch comments that “The Jewish commentators, relying upon **Seder Olam**, explain [the seven and twentieth year] of the reign of Nebuchadnezzar. He came to the throne in 605 B.C.E. which yields the date 578. Modern authorities, on the other hand, relate the number to that given in **verse 1**, the tenth year (586) and accordingly date this section 570 B.C.E. It was ‘written after Nebudhadnezzar’s thirteen years’ siege of Tyre had come to an end, and inserted among the prophecies relating to Egypt already collected. Nebudhad-nezzar had served a great service for God against Tyre, for which neither he nor his army had received wages. God will recompense him for his service against Tyre by giving him the land of Egypt’ (Davidson).” (P. 200)

1605

Matties comments on **verses 18-20** that “Although some think that the failure of the oracle against Tyre may pose a problem for the credibility of the prophet or the Divine word, prophetic certainty need not be the issue here. Prophetic announcements regarding the exercise of human power are always contingent. Moreover, [YHWH’s] radical freedom from human institutions and structures also requires that the Divine word cannot be imprisoned in its own fulfillment. [YHWH] is free to modify an announcement when the situation changes, especially when that word concerns the agent of Divine justice, Nebuchadnezzar (**verse 20**).” (P. 1200)

Do you agree with this comment? Is Matties attempting to get around the fact that the prophecy against Tyre was not fulfilled—in that Nebuchadnezzar failed to capture and destroy Tyre? And we ask, If the nature of the prophetic word is that it comes through (hazy) dreams and visions, and is characterized by riddles, are not such problems to be expected?

1606

(continued...)

הַעֲבִיר אֶת־חִילוֹ עֲבָדָה גְדֹלָה אֶל־צָר

caused his army to serve, a great labor to / at Tyre.

כָּל־רֹאשׁ מִקָּרַח וְכָל־פֶּתֶף מְרוּטָה

Every head was made bald, and every shoulder was made bare--¹⁶⁰⁷

וְשָׂכָר לֹא־הָיָה לוֹ וְלִחִילוֹ מִצָּר

and there was no pay to him and to his army from Tyre

עַל־הָעֲבָדָה אֲשֶׁר־עָבַד עָלֶיהָ:

over / for the labor which he / it labored over it.¹⁶⁰⁸

29:19¹⁶⁰⁹ לָכֵן כֹּה אָמַר אֲדֹנָי יְהוִה

Therefore in this way my Lord YHWH spoke:

הֲנִי נָתַן לְנְבוּכַדְרֶאֱצַר מֶלֶךְ־בָּבֶל אֶת־אֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם

Look at Me—giving to Nebukhadretstsar, king of Babylon, (the) land of Egypt,¹⁶¹⁰

¹⁶⁰⁶(...continued)

For this spelling of the king of Babylon's name, see **Ezekiel 26:7** with its footnote. It is the Babylonian spelling for the king's name.

¹⁶⁰⁷

Rabbi Fisch comments that “The Babylonian besiegers of Tyre had their heads made bald and the skin of their shoulders chafed by carrying loads of stone and timber in the campaign against the town—a vivid description of the laborious work involved in the long siege of Tyre [from 586 to 571 B.C.E., see **26:7-14**] ‘As Nebuchadnezzar had no fleet, the arm of the sea between Tyre and the mainland had to be filled up; hence the bearing of burdens’ (Lofthouse).” (P. 200)

¹⁶⁰⁸

Rabbi Fisch comments that “So far the Babylonians had received no award from [YHWH] for carrying out His task.” (P. 200)

¹⁶⁰⁹

Hilmer comments on that “[YHWH's] sovereignty over the nations is again proclaimed.” (P. 1267) Yes! YHWH is no parochial God, limited in scope to one nation or group of nations!

¹⁶¹⁰

(continued...)

וּנְשָׂא הַמָּנָה וְשָׁלַל שְׁלָלָהּ וּבָזַז בָּזָהּ

and he will carry off its wealth, and spoil its spoil, and plunder its plunder;

וְהָיְתָה שְׂכָר לְחֵילוֹ:

and it will be pay for his army--¹⁶¹¹

29:20 פְּעֻלָּתוֹ אֲשֶׁר-עָבַד בָּהּ

his recompence / payment which he labored in / for it,

נָתַתִּי לוֹ אֶת-אֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם

I have given to him (the) land of Egypt

אֲשֶׁר עָשׂוּ לִי

because they worked for Me!¹⁶¹²

¹⁶¹⁰(...continued)

Reimer notes that “This prophecy was given in 571 B.C.E...and Nebuchadnezzar conquered Egypt in 568 B.C.E. (this is described in detail in **Jeremiah 43-44** and also recorded in Josephus, **Jewish Antiquities 10.180-182**). Egypt was subsequently subject to Persian rule (beginning in 525 B.C.E.), was conquered by Alexander the Great and made part of his empire in 332 B.C.E., and was conquered by the Romans and became part of the Roman Empire [in 30 B.C.E. after Octavian (the future Roman emperor Augustus) defeated his rival Mark Antony, deposed Pharaoh Cleopatra, and annexed the Ptolemaic Kingdom to the Roman Empire.

¹⁶¹¹

Rabbi Fisch comments that “Because Nebuchadnezzar and his soldiers had no pay for their Tyrian campaign, they will be compensated by the spoil taken from Egypt.” (P. 200)

¹⁶¹²

The English translations we are consulting all express this idea that Nebuchadnezzar and his troops were “working for YHWH.” The Greek translation (**Rahlfs**) expresses it differently, stating ἀντὶ τῆς λειτουργίας αὐτοῦ ἧς ἐδούλευσεν ἐπὶ Τύρον δέδωκα αὐτῷ γῆν Αἰγύπτου, “in return for the public / priestly service (liturgy) of his which he slaved upon Tyre, I have given to him (the) land of Egypt.” This seems like a strange view of Nebuchadnezzar, the destroyer of Jerusalem—depicting him as doing YHWH a “priestly-like” service—especially when coming from a Jewish priest like Ezekiel!

And the whole passage sounds very strange indeed to those who have grown up being taught that YHWH is the God of Israel, but not the God of Babylon and the other nations of the earth. Ezekiel
(continued...)

נֹאם אֲדֹנָי יְהוָה:

(It is) a saying of my Lord YHWH.

29:21¹⁶¹³ בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא אֶצְמִיחַ קֶרֶן לְבַיִת יִשְׂרָאֵל

In that day, I will cause to sprout up a horn for Israel's house;¹⁶¹⁴

וְלָךְ אֶתֵּן פֶּתַח־פִּי בְּתוֹכָם

and to you, I will give opening of mouth in their midst;¹⁶¹⁵

¹⁶¹²(...continued)

believes in the universal Creator, YHWH, Who is the God of all peoples and nations, and Who rewards Nebuchadnezzar and his Babylonian army for doing His [YHWH's] work in besieging Tyre—by giving them the land of Egypt as payment for their Divine service! Can you understand that? Or is your God too small?

¹⁶¹³

Reimer comments on **verse 21** that “The final note of promise appears to be for Ezekiel himself. The phrase ‘open your lips’ does not relate to Ezekiel’s muteness (which would have ended years earlier than the events foretold here; see **33:21-22**). Rather, it affirms that, after all those years, Ezekiel’s prophetic ministry was to be vindicated.” (P. 1546)

¹⁶¹⁴

Rabbi Fisch comments that “The reference [of ‘in that day’] is to Cyrus and the return from Babylonian exile, and the phrase...denotes ‘at that time’ (Kimchi). Rashi understands it as alluding to the prediction of Egypt’s restoration at the end of forty years (**verse 13**). That restoration will coincide with the dawn of Israel’s release from captivity. Probably *horn* is to be interpreted as the symbol of power and prosperity, and Ezekiel predicts in general terms that in the future Israel will be restored to his former glory.” (P. 201)

Hilmer states that the phrase “make a horn grow for,” means “revive the strength of.” “The passage is not a Messianic prophecy.” (P. 1267)

¹⁶¹⁵

Rabbi Fisch comments that “The fulfilment of Ezekiel’s prediction will establish the authenticity of his message. No longer will he feel his speech restrained by the scepticism of his people.” (P. 201)

Hilmer comments differently that the phrase “open your mouth” means “Ezekiel’s muteness (**3:26; 24:27**) would be removed, and this word anticipates that of **33:22**.” (P. 1267)

(continued...)

וידעו כי־אני יהוה:

and they will know that I (am) YHWH!¹⁶¹⁶

The Approaching Day of Yahweh (30:1-19)

30:1 And YHWH's Word was / came to me saying: 30:2 Son of Adam / Humanity, prophesy! And you shall say: In this way my Lord YHWH spoke: Howl! Alas for the day! 30:3 Because a day (is) near; and near (is the) day for / belonging to the YHWH--a day of cloud(s); it will be a time (for) nations. 30:4 And a sword will come in Egypt; and there will be anguish in Ethiopia, when a corpse / corpses fall in Egypt. And they will take her abundance, and her foundations will be torn down. 30:5 Ethiopia and Put and Ludh, and all the Arabia; and Khubh and children of (the) land of the covenant with them by the sword will fall. 30:6 In this way YHWH spoke: And Egypt's supporters will fall, and pride (in) her strength will go down. From Mighdol (to) Sewene, they will fall by the sword in her! (It is) a saying of my Lord YHWH. 30:7 And they will be desolated in (the) midst of desolated lands; and his cities will be in (the) midst of cities laid waste / desolated. 30:8 And they will know that I (am) YHWH, when I give / place fire in Egypt; and all her helpers are broken. 30:9 On that day messengers will go out from before Me in the ships to terrify Cush / Ethiopia (dwelling) security / securely. And the anguish will be on them in Egypt's day, because look--it is coming! 30:10 In this way my Lord YHWH spoke: And I will cause Egypt's abundance / wealth to cease, by (the) hand of Nebukhadhretsar, king of Babylon. 30:11 He and his people with him, terror-striking nations, being brought to destroy the earth / land; and they will draw their swords over / against Egypt, and they will fill the earth / land (with the) pierced. 30:12 And I will give / make streams /

¹⁶¹⁵(...continued)

Matties disagrees, stating that "Given the date of this oracle, the address to Ezekiel about the opening of his lips probably does not suggest a renewal of the full prophetic task (see also **24:25-27; 33:21-22**), but it does affirm the authority inherent in the prophet's role as human stand-in for [YHWH] (see also **2:5; 33:33**).” (P. 1200)

¹⁶¹⁶

Darr reflects over **29:17-20** that "Ezekiel's predictions of Tyre's utter destruction by Nebuchadrezzar were not merely unfulfilled; they were invalidated...By the criterion advanced in **Deuteronomy 18: 22**, he had failed a 'test' that might have confirmed his authenticity as Yahweh's prophet...

"We are accustomed to competing voices in practically every facet of life, including the religious sphere. God-fearing people can and do disagree on the full range of issues we face. Preachers proclaim very different messages from their pulpits...Ezekiel's prophecies are not infallible, as if attempts to understand God's will and purpose were once-and-for-all, absolutely right or dead wrong. Ezekiel also must keep listening and thinking." (Pp. 270-271) Do you agree with Darr? Why? Why not?

canals dry ground; and I will sell the land into (the) hand of evil people. And I will ravage (the) land and its fullness by (the) hand of foreigners! I, YHWH, have spoken! 30:13 In this way my Lord YHWH spoke: And I will destroy idols, and I will cause (the) nothing-Gods to cease from Noph / Memphis. And a prince from (the) land of Egypt will no longer be. And I will give / place fear in (the) land of Egypt. 30:14 And I will ravage Pathros And I will place / set fire in Tsoan; and I will do / enact judgments in No / Thebes. 30:15 And I will pour out My wrath upon Siyn / Pelusium, place of safety (in) Egypt. And I will cut off (the) abundance / wealth of No / Thebes. 30:16 And I will give / set fire in Egypt. Siyn will truly writhe, and No / Thebes will be cut open, and Noph / Memphis—daily enemies. 30:17 Choice young men of Awen and Pi-beseth will fall by the sword, and they (feminine plural) will walk / go into captivity. 30:18 And in / at *tachpanches* the day was dark in / at My breaking there Egypt's yoke-bars. And (the) pride of its strength will be caused to cease in it. It—a cloud will cover it, and its daughters will walk / go into the captivity. 30:19 and I will do / enact judgments in / on Egypt; and they will know that I (am) YHWH!

The Approaching Day of Yahweh (30:1-19)¹⁶¹⁷

1617

Rabbi Fisch entitles **chapter 30** “The Imminent Fall of Egypt.” He comments that “Egypt, a world power and center of pagan worship, is to lose both attributes. Her collapse will be a blow to heathendom in general and a demonstration of the sovereignty of the true God. All her allies and dependent states will share her fate. Nebuchadnezzar is to be used as the agent for the execution of the Divine decree against her, and the destruction of the population and land will be extensive and thorough. (P. 201) Rabbi Fisch entitles **verses 1-19** “The Fate in Store for Egypt.”

Ezekiel describes the "Day of YHWH" as near, coming upon Egypt. The clouds and the sword are symbols for Nebuchadnezzar and the armies of Babylonia--that "most ruthless of nations" but also YHWH's servant. Ezekiel reveals a broad knowledge of Egyptian cities in this passage. Concerning Tahpanhes, compare **Jeremiah 43:4-7**, where refugees from Judah, including the prophet Jeremiah and his writer, Baruch, settled following the destruction of Jerusalem and the murder of Gedaliah.

“Gedalya(h) Hebrew: גִּדְיָהוּ or גִּדְיָהוּן; meaning "Jah has become Great" was, according to the narratives in the **Hebrew Bible's Scroll of Jeremiah** and **2 Kings**, appointed by Nebuchadnezzar II of Babylon as governor of Yehud province, which was formed after the defeat of the Kingdom of Judah and the destruction of Jerusalem, in a part of the territory that previously formed the kingdom. He was supported by a Chaldean guard stationed at Mizpah. On hearing of the appointment, the Jews that had taken refuge in surrounding countries returned to Judah. Gedaliah was the son of Ahikam (who saved the life of the prophet Jeremiah) and the grandson of Shaphan (who is mentioned in relation to the discovery of the Scroll of Teaching that some scholars identify as the core of the **Scroll of Deuteronomy**). He zealously began to encourage the people to cultivate the fields and vineyards, and thus lay the foundation of security. Many who had fled to neighboring lands during the war of destruction were
(continued...)

30:1 וַיְהִי דְבַר־יְהוָה אֵלַי לֵאמֹר:

And YHWH's word was / came to me saying:¹⁶¹⁸

30:2 בֶּן־אָדָם הַנְּבִיא וְאָמַרְתָּ

Son of Adam / Humanity, prophesy! And you shall say:

כֹּה אָמַר אֲדֹנָי יְהוִה

In this way my Lord YHWH spoke:

הֵילֵלוּ הָהָ לַיּוֹם:

Howl!¹⁶¹⁹ Alas for the day!¹⁶²⁰

¹⁶¹⁷(...continued)

attracted by the news of the revival of the community. They came to Gedaliah in Mizpah and were warmly welcomed by him. Ishmael son of Nethaniah, and ten men who were with him, murdered Gedaliah, together with most of the Jews who had joined him and many Babylonians whom Nebuchadnezzar had left with Gedaliah (**Jeremiah 41:2–3**). The remaining Judeans feared the vengeance of Nebuchadnezzar and fled to Egypt. Although the dates are not clear from the **Bible**, this probably happened about 582/1 B.C.E. (**Jeremiah 52:30**), some four to five years and three months after the destruction of Jerusalem and the First Temple in 586 B.C.E.” (**Wikipedia**, 8/13/2022)

Reimer entitles **30:1-19** “Lament for Egypt.” He comments that “The third of the seven anti-Egypt oracles is the only one undated, and it contains no written basis for dating. It is comprised of four relating prophecies, each introduced by [‘In this way YHWH spoke’] (**verses 2, 6, 10, 13**) and each echoing motifs and ideas seen elsewhere in Ezekiel’s oracles. Together they announce the fall not only of Egypt but also of her allies, and again by the hand of Nebuchadnezzar (**verse 10**). Much like in the Tyre oracle in **chapter 27**, there is no specific charge brought against Egypt here; rather, [YHWH’s] judgment is simply pronounced.” (P. 1546)

Hilmer notes that this is “The third oracle against Egypt (see **29:1**). No date is given, but it was probably between January and April of 587 B.C.E...Jerusalem was under siege at this time.” (P. 1268)

¹⁶¹⁸

Rabbi Fisch notes that “No date is assigned to this prophecy. It was possibly the same as in **Ezekiel 29:1**.” (P. 201)

¹⁶¹⁹

(continued...)

30:3 כִּי־קָרֹב יוֹם

Because a day (is) near;

וְקָרֹב יוֹם לַיהוָה

and near (is the) day for / belonging to the YHWH--¹⁶²¹

¹⁶¹⁹(...continued)

Rabbi Fisch says this command to “howl” or “wail” is “addressed to the Egyptians.” (P. 201)

¹⁶²⁰

Reimer comments on **verses 2-5** that “The cry of ‘the day’ (**verse 2**) and the announcement that ‘the day is near’ (**verse 3**) point to the ‘day of [YHWH]’ concept, developed in **7:10-27**...The bare announcement of day of [YHWH] finds its counterpart in ‘the time...for the nations,’ explained almost at once as a time of doom. Ezekiel combines this motif with the ‘sword of [YHWH] in a subtle way at **21:8-10**, but here the connection is overt with the reference to the sword in **30:4**.” (P. 1546)

Matties holds that “The *day of [YHWH]* (**verses 3a, 9b; Amos 5:18-20**) means judgment on Egypt, especially for its wealth (**verse 4b**) and its proud might (**verse 6**; see also **verse 18**).” (P. 1200)

¹⁶²¹

Rabbi Fisch comments that It will be the occasion when [YHWH’s] judgment will be passed upon the world.” (P. 202) We agree, but insist that YHWH’s day is a constantly recurring day, as YHWH continually judges the world and punishes it for injustice and inequity. It is not a “one time event” at the end of history / the world, as it is often depicted. Compare **Isaiah 13:6**,

הִלְלוּ

Howl (plural imperative)!

כִּי קָרֹב יוֹם יְהוָה

Because YHWH’s day is near!

כְּשֶׁד מִשָּׁדַי יָבֹא:

Like destruction from Shaddai it is coming!

Darr comments that “Only **Ezekiel 30:1-19**, the third of the prophet’s seven units against Pharaoh / Egypt, is not dated; and its three interrelated subunits (**verses 2-9**, **verses 10-12**, and **verses 13-19**) contain no explicit references to historical events...**Verses 2-9** take up ‘the day of Yahweh’ motif. Originally this motif expressed Israel’s expectation of a time when Yahweh, their mighty Warrior God, would destroy their adversaries. But during the reign of the northern kingdom’s Jeroboam II (786-746 B.C.E.), a Judean prophet named Amos traveled north and turned traditional expectations for Yahweh’s day on their heads. Despite their pretense of piety, Israel’s rich and powerful were afflicting the poor
(continued...)

יום ענן

a day of cloud(s);¹⁶²²

¹⁶²¹(...continued)

and vulnerable within their society. On account of their immoral and unjust practices, Yahweh's wrath would be unleashed against them (**Amos 5:18-20; 8:9-10**). They would be God's enemies on the day of the Lord! Amos' twist on the day of Yahweh motif was adopted by succeeding prophets (see, e.g., **Isaiah 2:12-17; Jeremiah 30:7; Joel 1:15; 2:1-12; Zephaniah 1:14-18**). Ezekiel himself employs it in **chapter 7** to describe the destruction of Israel's soil and its inhabitants. Here, however, he sets the motif to its original function, applying it to a foreign nation and its allies." (P. 271)

¹⁶²²

Rabbi Fisch notes that "As the clouds herald a storm, so will *the day of the Lord* bring drastic punishment upon those who deserve it." (P. 202) Compare **Joel 2:1-2**,

1 תקעו שופר בציון

Sound a ram's horn in Zion!

והריעו בְּהַר קְדְשִׁי

And raise a shout on My set-apart mountain!

יִרְגְּזוּ כָּל יֹשְׁבֵי הָאָרֶץ

Let all inhabitants of the land quake / tremble!

כִּי־בֹא יוֹם־יְהוָה כִּי קָרוֹב:

Because YHWH's day is coming; because (it is) near--

2 יוֹם חֹשֶׁךְ וְאִפְלָה

a day of darkness and gloom;

יוֹם עָנָן וְעִרְפָּל

a day of cloud(s) and heavy cloud(s).

כַּשֶּׁחַר פָּרַשׁ עַל־הַהָרִים

Like dawn spread out upon the mountains--

עַם רַב וְעִצּוֹם

a people, many and mighty!

Zephaniah 1:14-16,

14 קָרוֹב יוֹם־יְהוָה הַגָּדוֹל

The great day of YHWH (is) near;

קָרוֹב וּמְהֵרָ מְאֹד

near, and hurrying exceedingly!

(continued...)

עת גוים יהיה:

it will be a time (for) nations.¹⁶²³

¹⁶²²(...continued)

קול יום יהיה מר

(The) voice / sound of YHWH's day (is) bitter--

צרח שם גבור:

a mighty man's roaring (is) there!

15 יום עברה היום ההוא

A day of fury (is) that day--

יום צרה ומצוקה

a day of distress and anguish;

יום שאה ומשואה

a day of devastation and desolation;

יום חשך ואפלה

a day of darkness and gloom;

יום ענן וערפל:

a day of cloud(s) and heavy cloud(s).

16 יום שופר ותרועה

A day of a ram's horn and shouting / battle cry

על הערים הבצורות

against the cities, the fortified ones,

ועל הפנות הגבהות:

and against the high corners (of walls)!

¹⁶²³

This last line of **verse 3** is given varying translations:

King James, "it shall be the time of the heathen."

Tanakh, "An hour of *invading* nations."

New Revised Standard, "a time of doom for the nations." **New International** and **New Jerusalem**, same;

Rahlfs, ἡμέρα πέρας ἐθνωῶν ἔσται, "it will be a day, an end of nations."

Rabbi Fisch comments that "All the heathen peoples will be involved, Egypt among them." (P. 202)

30:4 וּבָאָה חֶרֶב בְּמִצְרַיִם

And a sword will come in Egypt,¹⁶²⁴

וְהִיְתָה חֲלָחְלָה בְּכוֹשׁ

and there will be anguish in Ethiopia,¹⁶²⁵

בְּנֶפֶל חָלַל בְּמִצְרַיִם

when a corpse / corpses fall in Egypt.

וְלָקְחוּ הַמּוֹנָה

And they will take her abundance,

וְנִהְרְסוּ יְסוּדֵיהָ:

and her foundations will be torn down.¹⁶²⁶

30:5¹⁶²⁷ כּוֹשׁ וּפּוּט וְלוּד וְכָל-הָעֲרָב

Ethiopia¹⁶²⁸ and Put and Ludh,¹⁶²⁹ and all the Arabia;¹⁶³⁰

1624

Rabbi Fisch comments that the “sword” here refers to “An attack by Babylon.” (P. 202)

Hilmer states that the sword is Nebuchadnezzar’s. (P. 1268) See **21:3** and **30:10**.

1625

Rabbi Fisch’s translation has “convulsion shall be in Ethiopia,” and he comments that “Ethiopia, being under the domination of Egypt, will be alarmed for her safety and terrified lest she share Egypt’s doom.” (P. 202)

1626

Rabbi Fisch notes that “The reference is to the allies and mercenaries upon whom Egypt relied for military strength. They are specified in the next verse.” (P. 202)

1627

Reimer comments on **verse 5** that for Cush, “see **29:10**. Put refers to the same region as Libya; for it and Lud, see **27:10** with footnote. The Hebrew underlying Arabia (*erebh*) literally means ‘mixed peoples.’ This geographical survey anticipates the central thrust of the next unit.” (P. 1547)

1628

(continued...)

וְכֹבֵד וּבְנֵי אֶרֶץ הַבְּרִית

and Khubh¹⁶³¹ and children of (the) land of the covenant¹⁶³²

¹⁶²⁸(...continued)

Rabbi Fisch comments, “Or *Cush*, like Egypt a son of Ham (**Genesis 10:6**); there was not only a blood relationship between them but also a close political connection.” (P. 202)

¹⁶²⁹

For Put and Ludh see **Ezekiel 27:10**. Hilmer states that Lud is Lydia, “not in Asia Minor...but somewhere in northern Africa.” (P. 1268)

¹⁶³⁰

Rabbi Fisch’s translation has “all the mingled people.” He comments “Compare all the kings of the mingled people (**Jeremiah 25:24**). It probably denotes Egypt’s mercenaries who were drawn from various races.” (P. 202)

The Hebrew phrase here, וְכָל-הָעָרָב, can be translated “and all the mixture.” The English translations we are consulting vary:

King James, “and all the mingled people”;

Tanakh, “and all the mixed populations”;

New Revised Standard, “and all Arabia”;

New International, same; **New Jerusalem**, same;

Rahlf’s, omits.

¹⁶³¹

Rabbi Fisch’s translation has *Cub*. He comments that it is “the name of a people which has not been identified.” (P. 202)

¹⁶³²

Where the Hebrew text has וּבְנֵי אֶרֶץ הַבְּרִית “and children of (the) land of the covenant,” the Greek translation (**Rahlf’s**) has καὶ τῶν υἱῶν τῆς διαθήκης μου, “and the sons of the covenant of Mine.”

Rabbi Fisch’s translation has “that is in league,” and he comments that it is literally “the land of the covenant,” that is, “in alliance with Egypt.” (P. 202)

Hilmer notes that the “people of the covenant land” apparently refers to “Jews living in Egypt (see **Jeremiah 44**).” (P. 1268)

אַתֶּם בַּחֶרֶב יִפְּלוּ:

with them by the sword will fall.

30:6¹⁶³³ כֹּה אָמַר יְהוָה

In this way YHWH spoke:

וְנָפְלוּ סִמְכֵי מִצְרַיִם

And Egypt's supporters will fall,

וַיִּרַד גְּאוֹן עִזָּהּ

and pride (in) her strength will go down.

מִמִּגְדֹּל סֶנְיָה בַּחֶרֶב יִפְּלוּ-בָּהּ

From Mighdol (to) Sewene,¹⁶³⁴ they will fall by the sword in her!

נֹאם אֲדֹנָי יְהוִה:

(It is) a saying of my Lord YHWH.

30:7 וְנִשְׁמְוּ בְּתוֹךְ אַרְצוֹת נִשְׁמְוֹת

And they will be desolated in (the) midst of desolated lands;¹⁶³⁵

וְעָרָיו בְּתוֹךְ-עָרִים נִחְרָבוֹת תִּהְיֶינָה:

and his cities will be in (the) midst of cities laid waste / desolated.

1633

Reimer comments on **verses 6-9** that “Here the allies of Egypt come into focus. They shall share the same fate as their master...The language of desolation also forges a link back to **29:8, 10**.” (P. 1547)

1634

On ‘Migdol to Syene,’ see **Ezekiel 29:10**.

1635

See **Ezekiel 29:12**.

30:8 וידעו כי־אני יהוה

And they will know that I (am) YHWH,¹⁶³⁶

בתתי־אש במצרים

when I give / place fire in Egypt;¹⁶³⁷

ונשברו כל־עזריה:

and all her helpers are broken.

30:9 ביום ההוא

On that day¹⁶³⁸

יצאו מלאכים מלפני בָּעִים

messengers will go out from before Me¹⁶³⁹ in the ships¹⁶⁴⁰

1636

Darr holds that “Here, as elsewhere in Ezekiel’s oracles against foreign nations, ‘knowing’ lacks positive connotations. It is, rather, a ‘last gasp’ realization by the Egyptians that Israel’s Deity has brought about their end.” (P. 273) We disagree. We hold that Yahweh is doing all in His power to get both Israel and the nations to know and acknowledge Him, in order to share in His blessings and “life.”

1637

Rabbi Fisch notes that “fire” is “a common figure in the **Bible** for the devastation caused by war.” (P. 203)

Himmler likewise states that “set fire to” is equivalent to “make war on.” (P. 1268)

1638

Rabbi Fisch notes that the phrase “on that day” is “defined at the end of the verse as *the day of Egypt*, the time of her downfall.” (P. 203) We say It is the day of YHWH, which is coming against Egypt.

1639

Rabbi Fisch quotes Lofthouse as commenting, “God speaks as if He had come in person into Egypt, like another and more terrible Nebuchadnezzar; but this is an incorrect interpretation of the phrase **from before Me**...The Jewish commentators rightly explain it as ‘on My mission,’ more exactly ‘at My will, on My orders.’” (P. 203)

1640

(continued...)

לְהַחֲרִיד אֶת־כּוּשׁ בְּטַח

to terrify Cush / Ethiopia (dwelling) security / securely.¹⁶⁴¹

וְהָיְתָה חִלְחָלָה בָּהֶם בְּיוֹם מִצְרַיִם

And the anguish will be on them in Egypt's day,¹⁶⁴²

כִּי הִנֵּה בָּאָה:

because look—it is coming!

30:10¹⁶⁴³

¹⁶⁴⁰(...continued)

Rabbi Fisch notes that the Hebrew **בַּצִּיִּים**, **batstsiym**, “in the ships,” “is a loan-word from the Egyptian...The rivers of Ethiopia are mentioned in **Isaiah 18:1** and they were used by messengers to reach different parts of the country.” (P. 203)

Hilmer says “**Isaiah 18** has a similar oracle on Cush, involving ships on the Nile.” (P. 1268) Yes. But there it is a message of hope for the coming harvest of YHWH, including a people or people from the horn of Africa being given to YHWH. Here it is a message of fear for Cush.

¹⁶⁴¹

Rabbi Fisch says a more literal translation is “to make Ethiopia (which had been) in a state of confidence afraid.” (P. 203)

¹⁶⁴²

Rabbi Fisch notes that “Another reading is *keyom* ‘(as) in a day of Egypt’...Kimchi’s interpretation is: the tidings of the approaching army will cause the Ethiopians as much alarm and consternation as they felt at the time Egypt’s collapse (compare **verse 4**).” (P. 203)

¹⁶⁴³

Reimer comments on **verses 10-12** that “The explicit identification of Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonians as the agents of [YHWH’s] wrath links to **29:17-20**, although it is likely that this unit comes from an earlier period. Likewise, the drying up of the Nile (**30:12**) links back to **29:9b-12**.” (P. 1547)

Matties states that “Nebuchadnezzar, with the help of barbarous nations, will devastate the land, kill its population, dry up the Nile channels (see also **Isaiah 19:5**), and sell the land to foreigners (see also **Ezekiel 29:19**).” (P. 1200)

כֹּה אָמַר אֲדֹנָי יְהוִה

In this way my Lord YHWH spoke:

וְהִשְׁבַּתִּי אֶת־הַמּוֹן מִצְרַיִם

And I will cause Egypt's abundance / wealth to cease,

בְּיַד נְבוּכַדְרֶצְצַר מֶלֶךְ־בָּבֶל:

by (the) hand of Nebukhadretsar,¹⁶⁴⁴ king of Babylon.

30:11 הוּא וְעַמּוֹ אִתּוֹ עֲרִיצֵי גוֹיִם

He and his people with him, terror-striking nations,¹⁶⁴⁵

מִיּוֹבְאִים לְשַׁחַת הָאָרֶץ

being brought to destroy the earth / land;

וְהִרְיָקוּ חֶרְבוֹתָם עַל־מִצְרַיִם

and they will draw their swords over / against Egypt,

וּמָלְאוּ אֶת־הָאָרֶץ חֶלְלָה:

and they will fill the earth / land (with the) pierced.

1644

Compare **Ezekiel 29:19**.

1645

See **Ezekiel 28:7; 31:12; 32:12**. Hilmer notes that this phrase, “most ruthless of nations” (in his translation), is “a common phrase for the Babylonians, who were known for their cruelty (see **2 Kings**

25:7, וְאֶת־בְּנֵי צְדָקְיָהוּ שָׁחַטוּ לְעֵינָיו

And Zedekiah's sons they slaughtered to / in his eye-sight;

וְאֶת־עֵינָיו צְדָקְיָהוּ עִוְרָה

and Zedekiah's eyes they blinded;

וַיִּאֶסְרֵהוּ בַּנְּחֹשֶׁתִּים

and they bound him with bronze (chains);

וַיְבִיֵּאוּהוּ בָבֶל:

and they brought him (to) Babylon.

30:12 וְנָתַתִּי יְאֲרִים חֲרָבָה

And I will give / make streams / canals dry ground;¹⁶⁴⁶

וּמְכַרְתִּי אֶת־הָאָרֶץ בְּיַד־רָעִים

and I will sell the land into (the) hand of evil people.¹⁶⁴⁷

וְהִשְׁמַתִּי אֶרֶץ וּמְלֵאָהּ בְּיַד־זָרִים

And I will ravage (the) land and its fullness by (the) hand of foreigners!

אֲנִי יְהוָה דִּבַּרְתִּי:

I, YHWH, have spoken!

30:13¹⁶⁴⁸

1646

Rabbi Fisch states “The drying up of the Egyptian canals and the destruction of its system of irrigation would inevitably bring desolation upon the country (compare **Isaiah 19:5-7**).” (P. 204)

1647

Rabbi Fisch states that these are “men who will prove themselves lawless and without pity.” (P. 204)

1648

Reimer comments on **verses 13-19** that “The knowledge of Egypt demonstrated in **29:14** is seen in this unit’s plethora [abundance] of names, often compared to **Micah 1:10-15**. To each place is joined a facet of the judgment to fall upon it...

“This litany of Divine actions amounts to a comprehensive rejection of Egyptian religion and politics. There is no clear geographical organization to the list, but where information is available, the judgments appear to be appropriate to the place...

“Memphis (**Ezekiel 30:13, 16**) was the capital of Lower Egypt, south of the Nile delta. On Pathros (**verse 14**), see **29:14**. Zoan (**30:14**), Pelusium (**verses 15-16**), and Tehaphnehes (**verse 18**) were in the northeastern delta, with Pelusium being a strategic fortress at the border with the Sinai. Thebes (**verses 14-16**) was the capital of Upper [Southern] Egypt, thus holding great symbolic value. On and Pi-beseth (**verse 17**) were in the southeastern delta, near the land of Goshen, the location of the sojourn of the people of Israel before the exodus (**Genesis 45:10**). Some of the judgments (**Ezekiel 30:18**) provide allusions to the exodus plagues.” (P. 1547)

(continued...)

כֹּה־אָמַר אֲדֹנָי יְהוִה

In this way my Lord YHWH spoke:

וְהִאַבְדֹתִי גִלּוּלִים

And I will destroy idols,

וְהִשְׁבַּתִּי אֱלִילִים מִנֹּפֶךְ

and I will cause (the) nothing-Gods to cease from Noph / Memphis.¹⁶⁴⁹

וְנָשִׂיא מֵאֶרֶץ־מִצְרַיִם לֹא יִהְיֶה־עוֹד

And a prince from (the) land of Egypt will no longer be.

¹⁶⁴⁸(...continued)

Hilmer notes that “Located 15 miles south of Cairo, Memphis was a former capital of Egypt and one of her largest cities. The list of towns reveals no discernible pattern but is a literary device used to underscore the scope of the destruction (compare **Isaiah 10:9-11, 27-32; Micah 1:10-15; Zephaniah 2:4**).” (P. 1268)

Matties likewise comments that “This list of places begins with Memphis, one of Egypt’s capital cities. It is home to colossal statues of pharaohs, which Ezekiel pejoratively calls excremental images [images made from waste matter discharged from the bowels; feces] (**verse 13**; see also **Ezekiel 6**), and whom he minimizes as mere *princes* (**verse 13**). The list of names, cities, and regions in Egypt follows common prophetic practice (e.g., **Isaiah 15:1-9; Jeremiah 48:1-5**) or mocks the lists of conquered cities inscribed on the walls of Egyptian tombs or temples.” (P. 1201)

¹⁶⁴⁹

The Greek translation (**Rahlfs**) of the Hebrew נֹפֶךְ, **noph**, is Μέμφις, Memphis. From **Wikipedia** we quote: “Noph or Moph was the Hebrew name for the ancient Egyptian city of Memphis, capital of Lower Egypt, which stood on the Nile near the site of modern-day Cairo. It is mentioned several times in the **Hebrew Bible** (**Isaiah 19:13; Jeremiah 2:16; 44:1 ; 46:14, 19; Ezekiel. 30:13, 16**).” (5/30/2020)

Rabbi Fisch notes that “Memphis, the capital of lower Egypt, was the site for the temples of the Egyptian Gods, Ptah and Apis. In the destruction of Egypt’s population, her religious institutions will also be involved.” (P. 204)

וְנָתַתִּי יִרְאָה בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם:

And I will give / place fear¹⁶⁵⁰ in (the) land of Egypt.

30:14 וְהִשְׁמַתִּי אֶת־פַּתְרוֹס

And I will ravage Pathros¹⁶⁵¹

וְנָתַתִּי אֵשׁ בְּצֹעַן

And I will place / set fire in Tsoan;¹⁶⁵²

וְעָשִׂיתִי שְׁפָטִים בְּנֹא:

and I will do / enact judgments in No / Thebes.¹⁶⁵³

1650

Compare **Isaiah 19:16**.

1651

Pathros is upper / southern Egypt. From **Wikipedia** we quote: “Pathros refers to Upper [Southern] Egypt, primarily the Thebaid where it extended from Elephantine fort to modern Asyut north of Thebes. Gardiner argues it extended to the north no farther than Abydos. It is mentioned in the **Hebrew Bible** in **Jeremiah 44:1** and **15**; **Isaiah 11:11**; and **Ezekiel 29:14, 30:14**. It is the homeland of the Pathrusim.” (5/30/2020)

1652

The Hebrew צֹעַן, **tsoan** is translated by the Greek (**Rahlfs**) as Τάνις, **Tanis**. From the Internet, we quote: “The name is supposed to mean ‘migration’ (Arabic, **tsan**). The site is the only one connected with the history of Israel in Egypt, before the exodus, which is certainly fixed, being identified with the present village of San at the old mouth of the Bubastic branch of the Nile, about 18 miles Southeast of Damietta. It should be remembered that the foreshore of the Delta is continually moving northward, in consequence of the deposit of the Nile mud, and that the Nile mouths are much farther north than they were even in the time of the geographer Ptolemy. Thus in the times of Jacob, and of Moses, Zoan probably lay at the mouth of the Bubastic branch, and was a harbor, Lake Menzaleh and the lagoons near Pelusium having been subsequently formed.” (**Bible Atlas**, 5/30/2020) Compare **Numbers 13:22** and **Psalms 78:12, 43**.

Hilmer notes that Zoan was “also called Rameses (see **Exodus 1:11**).” (P. 1268)

1653

(continued...)

30:15 וּשְׁפַכְתִּי חַמְתִּי עַל־סִין

And I will pour out My wrath upon Siyn / Pelusium,¹⁶⁵⁴

מְעוֹז מִצְרַיִם

place of safety (in) Egypt.

¹⁶⁵³(...continued)

No is another name for Thebes, the ancient capital of what is called the Middle Empire, in Upper or Southern Egypt. “Thebes, known to the ancient Egyptians as Waset, was an ancient Egyptian city located along the Nile about 500 miles south of the Mediterranean. Its ruins lie within the modern Egyptian city of Luxor. Thebes was the main city of the fourth Upper Egyptian nome and was the capital of Egypt for long periods during the Middle Kingdom and New Kingdom eras. It was close to Nubia and the Eastern Desert, with its valuable mineral resources and trade routes. It was a cult center and the most venerated city of ancient Egypt during its heyday. The site of Thebes includes areas on both the eastern bank of the Nile, where the temples of Karnak and Luxor stand and where the city proper was situated; and the western bank, where a necropolis of large private and royal cemeteries and funerary complexes can be found.” (Wikipedia, 5/30/2020)

Rabbi Fisch notes that “It is named No-amon in **Nahum 3:8** (compare Amon of No, **Jeremiah 46:25**), the town being associated with the worship of the God Amon.” (P. 205)

¹⁶⁵⁴

“Pelusium, Greek Pelousion, was an ancient Egyptian city on the easternmost mouth of the Nile River (long silted up). The Egyptians likely called it Sa’inu and also Per-Amon (House of Amon), whence perhaps the site’s modern name, Tell Farama. It lies about 20 miles southeast of Port Said, in the Sinai Peninsula. In the **Bible** the city is called (**Ezekiel 30:15**) ‘the stronghold of Egypt’ (the name being given in the **King James Version** as Sin, transliterated from the Hebrew). In the 26th and later Egyptian dynasties, Pelusium was the main frontier fortress against Palestine and was a customs post for Asiatic goods. In 525 B.C.E. the Persians, under Cambyses II, defeated the Saite pharaoh Psamtik III there. During the periods of Egyptian independence from Persia (28th–29th dynasty), it was a vital defensive center. In Roman times it was a station on the route to the Red Sea. Ruins date from the Roman period.” (Encyclopedia Britannica, 5/30/2020)

“Pelusium lay between the seaboard and the marshes of the Nile Delta, about two-and-a-half miles from the sea. The port was choked by sand as early as the first century B.C.E., and the coastline has now advanced far beyond its ancient limits that the city, even in the third century C.E., was at least four miles from the Mediterranean.” (Wikipedia, 5/30/2020)

וְהִכַּרְתִּי אֶת־הַמּוֹן נָא:

And I will cut off (the) abundance / wealth of No / Thebes.¹⁶⁵⁵

30:16 וְנָתַתִּי אֵשׁ בְּמִצְרַיִם

And I will give / set fire in Egypt.

חֹל (תְּחִיל) [תְּחֹל] סִין

Siyn will truly writhe,¹⁶⁵⁶

וְנָא תִּהְיֶה לְהִבְקַעַ

and No / Thebes will be cut open,

וְנָף צָרֵי יוֹמָם:

and Noph / Memphis—daily enemies.¹⁶⁵⁷

30:17 בְּחֹרֵי אֲוֵן וּפִי־בֶסֶת בְּחָרֵב יִפְּלוּ

Choice young men of Awen¹⁶⁵⁸ and Pi-beseth¹⁶⁵⁹ will fall by the sword,

1655

Rabbi Fisch's translation has "No shall be rent asunder," and he comments that "Though a fortress it will be breached and penetrated by the invading army." (P. 205)

1656

The Masoretes offer two readings: first, the *kethibh*, "what is written," תְּחִיל; and second, the qere, "to be read," תְּחֹל. This is a correction of the spelling / pointing.

1657

Rabbi Fisch's translation has "shall come adversaries in the day-time." He notes that "The text is difficult, the literal translation being 'Noph the adversaries of by day.' The sense is: confident in their overwhelming strength and despising Egyptian resistance, the invaders will attack not at night but in the day-time." (P. 205)

1658

Brown-Driver-Briggs suggests that Awen here should be read as אֲוֵן, אֵן = On; the Greek translation (**Rahfs**) has ἡλίου πόλεως, literally "of (the) sun, a city," Heliopolis.

(continued...)

¹⁶⁵⁸(...continued)

Encyclopedia Britannica states that “Heliopolis, (Greek), Egyptian Iunu or Onu (‘Pillar City’), biblical On, [was] one of the most ancient Egyptian cities and the seat of worship of the sun God, Re. It was the capital of the 15th nome of Lower Egypt, but Heliopolis was important as a religious rather than a political center. During the New Kingdom (c. 1539–1075 B.C.E.) its great temple of Re was second in size only to that of Amon at Thebes, and its priesthood wielded great influence, particularly during the 5th dynasty (c. 2465–c. 2325 B.C.E.), when the worship of Re became the state cult.” (5/30/2020)

Rabbi Fisch notes “It is also called Beth-shemesh, ‘House of the Sun’ (**Jeremiah 43:13**).” (P. 205)

¹⁶⁵⁹

The Hebrew name פִּי־בֶשֶׁת, **pi-bheseth** is translated by the Greek (**Rahlf**s) as Βούβαστος, Boubastos.

“An Ancient Egyptian city, Bubastis is often identified with the biblical Pi-Beseth (**Ezekiel 30:17**). It was the capital of its own nome, located along the River Nile in the Delta region of Lower Egypt, and notable as a center of worship for the feline Goddess Bastet, and therefore the principal depository in Egypt of mummies of cats. Its ruins are located in the suburbs of the modern city of Zagazig...The following is the description which Herodotus gives of Bubastis, as it appeared shortly after the period of the Persian invasion, 525 B.C.E., and Hamilton remarks that the plan of the ruins remarkably warrants the accuracy of this historical eye-witness.

Temples there are more spacious and costlier than that of Bubastis, but none so pleasant to behold. It is after the following fashion. Except at the entrance, it is surrounded by water: for two canals branch off from the river, and run as far as the entrance to the temple: yet neither canal mingles with the other, but one runs on this side, and the other on that. Each canal is a hundred feet wide, and its banks are lined with trees. The propylaea [monumental gateways] are sixty feet in height, and are adorned with sculptures (probably intaglios [a design incised or engraved into a material] in relief) nine feet high, and of excellent workmanship. The Temple being in the middle of the city is looked down upon from all sides as you walk around; and this comes from the city having been raised, whereas the temple itself has not been moved, but remains in its original place. Quite round the temple there goes a wall, adorned with sculptures. Within the inclosure is a grove of fair tall trees, planted around a large building in which is the effigy (of Bast). The form of that temple is square, each side being a stadium [sports arena] in length. In a line with the entrance is a road built of stone about three stadia long, leading eastwards through the public market. The road is about 400 feet broad, and is flanked by exceeding tall trees. It leads to the temple of Hermes. (**Herodotus 2, 59-60**)” (**Wikipedia**, 5/30/2020)

(continued...)

וְהָנָה בְּשָׁבִי תִלְכְּנָה:

and they (feminine plural) will walk / go into captivity.¹⁶⁶⁰

30:18 וּבַתְּחַפְּנֵחַס חֹשֶׁךְ הַיּוֹם

And in / at **tachpanches**¹⁶⁶¹ the day was dark¹⁶⁶²

¹⁶⁵⁹(...continued)

Rabbi Fisch notes that it is “Bubastis, now Tel basta, about forty miles northeast of Cairo, meaning ‘the city of the cat-shaped idol.’ All the places enumerated in **verses 13-18** seem to have been the centers of different forms of idolatry.” (P. 205)

¹⁶⁶⁰

Reimer notes that “The Hebrew text has only a feminine pronoun (‘they’), and the **English Standard Version** supplies the referent as ‘women,’ anticipating the ending of **verse 18**; it could also be ‘cities,’ which is grammatically feminine.” (P. 1548)

¹⁶⁶¹

Rabbi Fisch notes that “In **Jeremiah 2:16; 43:7-9** the name of the city is תַּחְפְּנֵחַס, Tachpanches. It is probably the modern Tel el-Defenne, Daphnae, one of the chief fortresses of ancient Egypt.” (P. 205) Here in **Ezekiel 30:18** the name is spelled תַּחְפְּנֵחַס, **thechaphneches**.

Hilmer comments that the city was located “in extreme northeast Egypt. Johanan son of Kareah and his men fled there after the murder of Gedaliah.” (P. 1269) See **Jeremiah 43:4-7**,

4 וְלֹא-שָׁמַע יוֹחָנָן בֶּן-קָרַח

And Yochanan, son of Qareach, did not listen,

וְכָל-שָׂרֵי הַחֵיָלִים וְכָל-הָעָם

and all (the) officials of the armies, and all the people,

בְּקוֹל יְהוָה לְשֹׁבֵת בְּאֶרֶץ יְהוּדָה:

to YHWH’s voice, to dwell in (the) land of Judah.

5 וַיִּקַּח יוֹחָנָן בֶּן-קָרַח וְכָל-שָׂרֵי הַחֵיָלִים

And Yochanan, son of Qareach, and all (the) officials of the armies, took

אֵת כָּל-שְׂאֵרֵי יְהוּדָה

(continued...)

בְּשִׁבְרֵי־שָׁם אֶת־מִטּוֹת מִצְרַיִם

in / at My breaking there Egypt's yoke-bars.¹⁶⁶³

¹⁶⁶¹(...continued)

(the) whole remnant of Judah,

אֲשֶׁר־שָׁבוּ מִכָּל־הַגּוֹיִם אֲשֶׁר נִדְחוּ־שָׁם

who had returned from all the nations where they had been banished,

לְגוֹר בְּאֶרֶץ יְהוּדָה:

to live as temporary residents in (the) land of Judah,

6 אֶת־הַגְּבָרִים וְאֶת־הַנְּשִׁים וְאֶת־הַטַּף

the men and the women / wives, and the children,

וְאֶת־בָּנוֹת הַמֶּלֶךְ וְאֵת

and (the) daughters of the king,

כָּל־הַנֶּפֶשׁ אֲשֶׁר הֵנִיחַ נְבוּזַרְאֲדָן רֶב־טַבָּחִים

and every person whom Nebhuzaradhan, Captain of the guard caused to remain

אֶת־גִּדְלִיָּהוּ בֶן־אֲחִיקָם בֶּן־שַׁפָּן

with Gedhalyahu, son of Achiyqam, son of Shaphan,

וְאֵת יִרְמְיָהוּ הַנָּבִיא

and with Jeremiah the prophet,

וְאֶת־בָּרוּךְ בֶּן־נֶרְיָיָהוּ:

and with Baruk, son of Neriyياهو.

7 וַיָּבֹאוּ אֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם

And they entered (the) land of Egypt;

כִּי לֹא שָׁמְעוּ בְּקוֹל יְהוָה

because they did not listen in / to (the) voice of YHWH.

וַיָּבֹאוּ עַד־תַּחְפְּנֶחֶס:

And they came as far as Tachpanches.

1662

Rabbi Fisch's translation has "the day shall withdraw itself." He says this is "A figure for utter despair and helplessness. Another reading...is 'the day will grow dark.'" (P. 205)

Hilmer comments that being "dark" is "a common biblical metaphor describing ruin, destruction or death." (P. 1269) Compare the later statement in this verse that the city would be covered with clouds as YHWH breaks the yoke of Egypt.

1663

(continued...)

וְנִשְׁבַּת-בָּהּ גְאוֹן עִזָּה

and (the) pride of its strength will be caused to cease in it.

הִיא עָנָן יִכְסֶּנָּה

It—a cloud will cover it,

וּבְנוֹתֶיהָ בִּשְׂבִי תִלְכְּנָה:

and its daughters will walk / go into the captivity.¹⁶⁶⁴

30:19 וְעָשִׂיתִי שְׁפָטִים בְּמִצְרַיִם

And I will do / enact judgments in / on Egypt;

וַיָּדְעוּ כִּי־אֲנִי יְהוָה:

and they will know that I (am) YHWH!¹⁶⁶⁵

¹⁶⁶³(...continued)

Rabbi Fisch's translation has "the yokes of Egypt," and he states that this is figurative for "the tyranny which Egypt inflicted upon other nations." (P. 205)

¹⁶⁶⁴

Rabbi Fisch notes that "The Targum renders: 'the inhabitants of her towns.' The Hebrew for *daughters* often occurs in the sense of smaller towns adjacent to a large city." (P. 206)

¹⁶⁶⁵

Rabbi Fisch comments that "The ultimate purpose of these chastisements is to vindicate the sovereignty of God." (P. 206) Darr states, "The execution of all these punishments will force the Egyptians to acknowledge Yahweh's sovereign and unparalleled power as manifested in their own history." (P. 275)

We say, No...the ultimate purpose is to enable all of those involved to know YHWH as their God. YHWH is revealing Himself / His nature through His actions in the history of nations and people. It is not to enable them to prove a theological truth, such as Divine sovereignty—but rather to enable them to enter into a personal relationship with YHWH—something similar to a man's "knowing" his wife!

Darr reflects on **verses 13-19**, "How great is Ezekiel's faith in the power of Israel's God, that He should speak of Yahweh using one mighty empire to destroy another!...We can only wonder that he, and other like-minded Judeans, continued to assert God's sovereignty amid the taunts of hostile neighbors (continued...)"

¹⁶⁶⁵(...continued)

(e.g., Ammonites, **25:3,6**; Moabites, **25:8**; Tyrians, **26:2**) and the victory shouts of the Babylonians, who attributed their triumphs to their own Deities. For the prophet, even the forces of nature obey Yahweh's commands: gloom accompanies doom; the waters of the mighty Nile dry up...

“In a world where people tend to place their trust in what is powerful, successful, and prosperous, we do well to ponder Ezekiel's steadfast faith. Living on foreign soil and experiencing (albeit from a distance) the destruction of his modest homeland, while world empires jostle for power, he insists nonetheless that the just and mighty God of Israel, Who alone is worthy of faith, yet rules history. Against all 'evidence,' he stands with God and summons his readers to do likewise. Even as we question aspects of the content of his faith, we marvel at its unwavering tenacity.” (Pp. 275-276)

Pharaoh's Arms are Broken (30:20-26)¹⁶⁶⁶

30:20 וַיְהִי בְּאַחַת עֶשְׂרֵה שָׁנָה

And it happened in (the) eleventh year,¹⁶⁶⁷

בְּרֵאשׁוֹן בְּשִׁבְעָה לַחֹדֶשׁ

in the first (month), on (day) seven to / of the month,¹⁶⁶⁸

1666

Rabbi Fisch entitles **verses 20-26** “Defeat of Egypt by Nebuchadnezzar.”

This message is dated April 29, 587 B.C.E. Breaking the arms of Pharaoh refers to Pharaoh Hophra's defeat by Nebuchadnezzar which had occurred one year earlier. Again YHWH's universal reign is obvious from such language, and His actions in human history are a means of His Self-revelation to all peoples and nations.

Reimer entitles these verses “The Kings of Egypt and Babylon.” He comments that “The dates return in this fourth Egypt oracle, locating this unit in April 587 B.C.E. This oracle contrasts the weakness of Hophra’s forces with the might of Babylon. The direct confrontation between these kings has been announced in **verse 10**. The sword (**verses 21-22**) will fall from the hand of Hophra, but Nebuchadnezzar wields the sword of [my Lord YHWH]...Again, the king of Babylon does [YHWH’s] work (**29:20**).” (P. 1548)

Hilmer notes that the date given here is the eighth date in **Ezekiel** (see **1:2; 8:1; 20:1; 24:1; 26:1; 29:1, 17**).” (P. 1269)

Matties comments on **30:20-26** that “Dated to April 587 B.C.E., this fourth oracle probably refers to the defeat of Pharaoh Hophra by Nebuchadnezzar after Hophra attempted to intervene in the siege of Jerusalem (**Jeremiah 37:5**). One of Hophra’s arms has already been broken and has not healed, and the king of Babylon, with his arms strengthened by [YHWH], is about to break Hophra’s other arm...Now, [YHWH] stands against Pharaoh (**verse 22**). Taking the sword from Pharaoh, He puts it into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar, by which He will scatter the Egyptians among the nations and demonstrate [YHWH’s] sovereignty over the Gods of Egypt.” (P. 1201)

1667

Rabbi Fisch notes that this is “the eleventh year of the reign of Zedekiah, about four months before the fall of Jerusalem.” (P. 206)

1668

(continued...)

הָיָה דְבַר־יְהוָה אֵלַי לֵאמֹר:

YHWH's Word was / came to me, saying:

30:21 בֶּן־אָדָם

Son of Adam / Humanity,

אֶת־זְרוּעַ פַּרְעֹה מִלֶּךְ־מִצְרַיִם שִׁבַּרְתִּי

Pharaoh, king of Egypt's arm, I have broken.¹⁶⁶⁹

¹⁶⁶⁸(...continued)

Darr comments that “Three months have passed since Ezekiel delivered his initial series of oracles against Egypt (29:1-16), and Nebuchadnezzar's siege of Jerusalem has been underway for about fifteen months. The present, highly repetitive unit presupposes the failure of Pharaoh Hophra's earlier attempt to end that siege. Now, lest the exiles continue to pin their hopes for national survival on Egyptian intervention, Yahweh announces the impending, total defeat of Pharaoh's army and the scattering of Egypt's population, ‘throughout the lands.’ Here, as in 29:17-20 and 30:10-12, the king of Babylon (Nebuchadnezzar) functions as God's agent of destruction.” (P. 276)

1669

Rabbi Fisch comments that “The allusion is to the advance of Pharaoh Hophra to relieve Jerusalem while it was besieged by the Babylonians. It brought only a temporary respite. The Egyptian army withdrew and the Babylonians renewed the attack (Jeremiah 37:5-8). Egypt's decisive defeat at the hands of Nebuchadnezzar is recorded in 2 Kings 24:7.” (P. 206)

Jeremiah 37:5-8,

5 וַחֵיל פַּרְעֹה יָצָא מִמִּצְרַיִם

And Pharaoh's army went forth from Egypt.

וַיִּשְׁמְעוּ הַכַּשְׂדִּים הַצָּרִים עַל־יְרוּשָׁלַם אֶת־שִׁמְעָם

And the Chaldeans heard, the ones besieging over / against Jerusalem, their report,

וַיֵּעָלוּ מֵעַל יְרוּשָׁלַם:

and they went up / withdrew from over / against Jerusalem.

6 וַיְהִי דְבַר־יְהוָה אֶל־יִרְמְיָהוּ הַנָּבִיא לֵאמֹר:

And YHWH's word was / came to Jeremiah the prophet, saying:

7 כֹּה־אָמַר יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל

In this way YHWH God of Israel spoke:

כֹּה תֹאמְרוּ אֶל־מֶלֶךְ יְהוּדָה

In this way you shall speak to (the) king of Judah,

(continued...)

וְהִנֵּה לֹא־חִבְּשָׁה לָתֵת רְפָאוֹת

And look—it was not bound up, to give healing,

לְשׂוּם חֲתוּל לְחִבְּשָׁה

to place a bandage for binding it,

לְחִזְקָהּ לְחַפֵּשׂ בַּחֶרֶב:

to strengthen it to wield a sword.¹⁶⁷⁰

30:22 לֵכֵן כֹּה־אָמַר אֲדֹנָי יְהוִה

¹⁶⁶⁹(...continued)

הַשֵּׁלַח אֶתְכֶם אֵלַי לְדַרְשָׁנִי

the one sending you to Me to inquire of Me:

הִנֵּה חֵיַל פְּרֹעָה הֵיִצָּא לָכֶם לְעִזְרָה

Look—Pharaoh’s army, the one going forth to you people for help,

שׁב לְאַרְצוֹ מִצְרַיִם:

is returning to its land Egypt!

8 וְשָׁבוּ הַכַּשְׂדִּים וְנִלְחְמוּ עַל־הָעִיר הַזֹּאת

And the Chaldeans will return, and will fight over / against this city;

וְלָכְדָהּ וְשָׂרְפָהּ בָּאֵשׁ:

and they will capture it, and will burn it with the fire!

2 Kings 24:7,

וְלֹא־הִסִּיף עוֹד מֶלֶךְ מִצְרַיִם לָצֵאת מֵאַרְצוֹ

And Egypt’s king did not add again to go forth from Egypt,

כִּי־לָקַח מֶלֶךְ בָּבֶל

because Babylon’s king took—

מִנְחַל מִצְרַיִם עַד־נְהַר־פָּרָת

from (the) wadi of Egypt as far as (the) river Euphrates—

כָּל־אֲשֶׁר הָיְתָה לְמֶלֶךְ מִצְרַיִם:

everything that belonged to Egypt’s king.

¹⁶⁷⁰

Rabbi Fisch states that “The damage done to Egypt was irreparable.” (P. 206)

Therefore, in this way my Lord YHWH spoke:

הֲנִנִּי אֶל-פַּרְעֹה מֶלֶךְ-מִצְרַיִם

Look at Me—against Pharaoh, king of Egypt;

וְשִׁבַּרְתִּי אֶת-זְרֻעֹתָיו

and I will break his arms--

אֶת-הַחֲזָקָה וְאֶת-הַנְּשֻׁבָרָה

the strong one, and the broken one;¹⁶⁷¹

1671

Darr observes how often the word “arm” occurs in this text. And she recalls **Ezekiel 20:33**, “‘As I live, says the Lord God, surely with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, and with wrath poured out, I will be King over you.’ Block observes that the figure of a sword- (or club-) wielding Pharaoh is common in Egyptian iconography. A scene from the reign of Amenhotep II, for example, presents the king ‘holding the locks of his enemy in one hand and the other hand poised to bludgeon the man. The accompanying inscription reads: ‘Amenhotep...who smites the rulers of the foreign lands of the far north, he is a God Whose arm is great.’ Among Pharaoh Hophra’s royal titles was ‘Possessor of a Strong Arm’...

“In **verse 21**, Yahweh speaks of having already ‘broken the arm’ of Pharaoh. In the aftermath of that military defeat, his arm has been neither bound so that it might heal, nor securely bandaged so that, once strengthened, it might grasp a sword. In other words, Pharaoh has not sufficiently recovered from his last engagement of the Babylonian army to muster another. Now, God intends to break both of the king’s arms, the (remaining) strong one, and the one already broken...Disabled, Pharaoh will be utterly unable to grasp sword in hand; and Yahweh will scatter the defenseless Egyptians throughout the lands...

“The same God Who cripples Pharaoh’s arms will strengthen the arms of Babylon’s king...while **verse 25b** affirms that God’s ultimate goal will be achieved: the Egyptians will be forced to acknowledge (‘know’) Who Yahweh is—the sovereign Lord of history, including their own—when the king of Babylon wields God’s Own sword and stretches it across their land.” (Pp. 276-277)

Darr reflects on **verses 20-26** that “In this passage, the prophet presents Yahweh as a Torturer Who cripples Pharaoh’s arms so that he groans like one mortally wounded. The resulting image, Blenkinsopp concedes, is sadistic: ‘Yahweh has broken Pharaoh’s arm, Pharaoh will not receive medical attention to enable him to take up arms again, and, just to make sure, Yahweh will break it again and the other one also for good measure’ ...The Lord of history, Whose punishment of the house of Israel Ezekiel proclaims to be just and proportionate to its sins, is Lord of Egypt’s history as well, and of all the nations on the earth...

(continued...)

וְהִפַּלְתִּי אֶת־הַחֶרֶב מִיָּדוֹ:

and I will cause the sword to fall from his hand!¹⁶⁷²

30:23 וְהִפְצוֹתִי אֶת־מִצְרַיִם בְּגוֹיִם

And I will scatter Egypt / Egyptians among the nations,

וּזְרִיתֶם בְּאֲרָצוֹת:

and I will scatter / disperse them among (the) lands.¹⁶⁷³

30:24 וְחִזַּקְתִּי אֶת־זְרָעוֹת מַלְךְ בָּבֶל

And I will strengthen (the) arms of (the) king of Babylon;

וְנָתַתִּי אֶת־חֶרְבִי בְיָדוֹ

and I will give / place My sword in his hand,¹⁶⁷⁴

¹⁶⁷¹(...continued)

“Blenkinsopp also is troubled by the violence of Ezekiel’s oracles against foreign nations and rulers: ‘There are matters in the Bible which are time- and culture-conditioned; there are high points and low points...These must be taken into account in our response to the texts.’ Ezekiel’s world, like our own, was filled with violence. And in his view, God was capable of violent emotions and actions. His perspective plays well where people hunger for revenge, but it creates a dangerous Divine role model.” (Pp. 277-278)

¹⁶⁷²

Rabbi Fisch comments that “Defeat will follow defeat until Egypt is rendered completely powerless.” (P. 206)

¹⁶⁷³

Reimer notes that the language of “scatter” and “disperse” appeared in **29:12**. He adds that “The fear of dispersion is one of the most deep-seated [fears] in the **Old Testament** (e.g., **Genesis 11:4**; compare **Ezekiel 28:24-26**).” (P. 1548)

¹⁶⁷⁴

Rabbi Fisch comments that YHWH’s “putting My sword I his hand” means “Nebuchad-nezzar is [YHWH’s] instrument for punishing Egypt.” (P. 207)

וְשִׁבַּרְתִּי אֶת־זְרָעוֹת פַּרְעֹה

and I will break Pharaoh's arms.

וְנָאֵק נֶאֱקוֹת חָלָל לְפָנָיו:

and he will truly groan, a pierced body, before him.

30:25¹⁶⁷⁵ וְהִחַזְקֹתִי אֶת־זְרָעוֹת מֶלֶךְ בָּבֶל

And I will strengthen (the) arms of (the) king of Babylon;

וְזְרָעוֹת פַּרְעֹה תִפְלְנָה

and Pharaoh's arms will fall.

וְיָדְעוּ כִּי־אֲנִי יְהוָה

And they will know that I (am) YHWH,

בְּתַתִּי חֶרְבִי בְיַד מֶלֶךְ־בָּבֶל

when I give / place My sword in (the) hand of (the) king of Babylon.

וְנָטָה אוֹתָהּ אֶל־אֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם:

And he will stretch it out to (the) land of Egypt!

30:26 וְהִפְצֹתִי אֶת־מִצְרַיִם בְּגוֹיִם

And I will scatter Egypt / Egyptians among the nations;

וְזָרִיתִי אוֹתָם בְּאֶרְצוֹת

and I will scatter them among the lands;¹⁶⁷⁶

¹⁶⁷⁵

Rabbi Fisch comments that **verses 23** and **24** are “repeated in substance” in **verses 25** and **26**, “for final emphasis.” (P. 207)

¹⁶⁷⁶

We note how similar this statement concerning YHWH's scattering Egypt among the nations is
(continued...)

וידעו כי־אני יהוה:

And they will know that I (am) YHWH!¹⁶⁷⁷

**A Lesson for Egypt to Learn from Assyria,
The Mighty but Fallen Cedar of Lebanon (Chapter 31)**

31:1 And it happened, in (the) eleventh year, on the third (day), on (the) first (day) to / of the month--YHWH's Word was / came to me saying: 31:2 Son of Adam / Humanity, speak to Pharaoh, king of Egypt and to his crowd: To whom are you likened, in your greatness? 31:3 Look--Assyria, a cedar in the Lebanon--beautiful of branch, and wood(en trunk), casting shade, and high-ranking (in) height. And between its leafy branches was its tree-top. 31:4 Waters caused it to grow; deep (water) raised it up; with its streams walking / flowing around its place of planting, and with its water-courses it sent forth to all (the) trees of the field. 31:5 Therefore its

¹⁶⁷⁶(...continued)

to the same actions that YHWH took against Israel, scattering them among the nations. Also note that the first two lines in **verse 26** are a repetition of similar lines in **verse 23**.

And remember the predictions made by YHWH in **Ezekiel 29:13-16**, promising that after forty years of Egypt's being scattered among the nations, He will restore the fortunes of Egypt and bring the scattered people back to Egypt, to be a lowly kingdom. YHWH deals with Egypt in similar fashion to the way He deals with Israel. He uses Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon as His servant to punish both Israel and Egypt. And it is through His punishment that both Israel and Egypt will come to know YHWH.

¹⁶⁷⁷

When military disaster strikes, or pandemics come, if we have eyes to see, and ears to hear, we will come to know YHWH, in ways that we have been blind to before.

height grew higher than all (other) trees of the field. And its boughs were many, and its branches grew long, from (the) many waters in its sending-forth. 31:6 In its branches nested every bird of the heavens; and beneath its boughs every wild animal of the field gave birth; and in its shade dwelt everyone of many nations. 31:7 And it was beautiful in its greatness, in (the) length of its branches; because its roots were / came to many waters. 31:8 Cedars did not eclipse / dim it in God's garden. Cypress trees were not like its boughs; and plane-trees were not like its branches. Every tree in God's garden was not like it in its beauty. 31:9 I made it beautiful in (the) abundance of its branches; and all (the) trees of Eden were envious of it, which (were) in (the) garden of the God(s)! 31:10 Therefore in this way my Lord YHWH spoke: Because you were high in height, and He gave / placed your (tree-)top between (its) leafy-foilage; and his heart was raised / proud in / of his height--31:11 and I will place him in (the) hand of a chief of nations; he will truly do to him according to his wickedness. I have driven him out! 31:12 And they cut it down--foreigners, awe-inspiring / terror-striking nations; and they forsook / left him, to / on the mountains and in all (the) valleys his branches fell. And its shoots were broken off in all the earth's / land's wadis / ravines. And they went down / away from his shadow, all peoples of the earth / land, and they forsook Him / it. 31:13 Upon its fallen remains will settle every bird of the heavens; and to its branches came every wild animal of the field. 31:14 In order that no trees (by the) water may be high in their height; and they may not place their (tree-)top between their leafy foilage; and their leaders may not stand in their height, everyone that drinks water. Because all of them have been given to the death, to (the) land below, in (the) midst of (the) children of Adam / Humanity, to those going down (to the) pit. 31:15 In this way my Lord YHWH spoke: On (the) day of his going down to *sheol* I caused mourning; I covered over him with (the) deep. And I withheld its streams. And many waters were restrained. And I darkened Lebanon over him. And all trees of the field fainted over him. 31:16 From (the) sound of his fall, I caused nations to quake; at my bringing him down to sheol with those going down (to the) pit. And they were comforted in (the) land below / underworld, all trees of Eden, (the) choice one(s), and good (ones) of Lebanon--all those drinking waters. 31:17 They also with him descended to sheol, to those pierced by (the) sword and His arm--they sat / dwelt in its shadow, in (the) midst of (the) nations. 31:18 To whom were you like thus, in glory, and in greatness among Eden's trees? And you will be brought down with Eden's trees to (the) land beneath / underworld! In (the) midst of (the) uncircumcised you will sleep, with those pierced (by the) sword. That (is) Pharaoh, and all his crowd! (It is) a saying of my Lord YHWH.

**A Lesson for Egypt to Learn from Assyria,
The Mighty but Fallen Cedar of Lebanon (Chapter 31)**

31:1¹⁶⁷⁸

1678

Rabbi Fisch entitles **chapter 31** "Assyria's Fate a Warning to Egypt." He comments that "The (continued...)"

¹⁶⁷⁸(...continued)

eclipse of Assyria is held up to Egypt as an example of Divine punishment for self-exaltation and arrogance. Mighty Assyria, the powerful conqueror of many nations [at the direction of YHWH], had vanished in ruins from the stage of history. A similar fate will befall Egypt, the mistress of many peoples. Only at the beginning and the end of the chapter is Pharaoh, the representative of Egypt, explicitly mentioned; the middle section deals with the eminence and subsequent decline of Assyria as the prototype of Egypt's doom." (P. 207)

But has Rabbi Fisch forgotten YHWH's promise to Egypt in **29:13-16**? Punishment of Egypt by YHWH? Yes, of course, just as punishment was to come on Judah. But this did not mean for Egypt "vanishing from the stage of history," nor is Egypt's future one of "doom."

Again, Ezekiel uses a thinly veiled allegory or "vision-story," perhaps acted out, in describing the world-wide kingdom of Assyria, that is now fallen. YHWH expects Egypt to learn from Assyria's experience. So should our America, with our proud claims, and with our failure to know YHWH in spite of His blessings showered on us! What do you think?

Darr comments on **chapter 31** that "The fifth pronouncement against Pharaoh / Egypt comprise a single unit consisting of three interrelated subunits: **verses 2b-9**, **verses 10-14**, and **verses 15-18**...The first, an extended metaphor in verse, speaks of a cosmic or world tree—a conventional mythological image not confined to ancient near Eastern literature. The second (**verses 10-14**) describes the tree's destruction on account of its hubris (pride); and the third (**verses 15-18**) follows it to Sheol, the underworld habitat of the dead...

"Ezekiel takes up his extended arboreal [relating to trees] metaphor toward political ends. The unit's significance lies not in its relationship to some ancient myth (though its message is enriched by multiple mythic elements), but in its insistence that proud Pharaoh and his nation will go the way of arrogant Assyria and its king. Ezekiel's actual audience does not include Pharaoh, of course. His goal is to shatter his fellow exiles' hopes that Egypt will deliver Jerusalem from Nebuchadrezzar's death grip. There is, perhaps, no better way to undermine the exiles' confidence than to make a comparison with the other major ancient Near Eastern power to whom Egypt had been subject, a power now in ruins." (Pp. 278-279)

Reimer entitles **verses 1-18** "The Fall of Pharaoh." He comments that "Ezekiel's fifth oracle against Egypt dates to June 21, 587 B.C.E., thus only a few weeks after the preceding unit. Here the prophet points to Assyria as an object lesson to Egypt. In its dying days, the once-mighty Assyrian Empire looked to Egypt for help against the mounting power of Babylon (about 610 B.C.E.). Even together they could not withstand the Babylonian onslaught. That had been a mere 23 years earlier, well within

living memory...In Isaiah's prophecies, given earlier still, Assyria—pride personified—was chopped down
(continued...)

וַיְהִי בְּאַחַת עֶשְׂרֵה שָׁנָה

And it happened, in (the) eleventh year,¹⁶⁷⁹

בְּשָׁלִישִׁי בְּאַחַד לַחֹדֶשׁ

on the third (day), on (the) first (day) to / of the month--¹⁶⁸⁰

הָיָה דְבַר־יְהוָה אֵלַי לֵאמֹר:

YHWH's Word was / came to me saying:

31:2 בֶּן־אָדָם אָמַר אֶל־פַּרְעֹה מֶלֶךְ־מִצְרַיִם

Son of Adam / Humanity, speak to Pharaoh, king of Egypt

וְאֶל־הַמּוֹנֵי

and to his crowd:¹⁶⁸¹

¹⁶⁷⁸(...continued)

by the axe [הַגִּרְזֵן] of [YHWH] (**Isaiah 10:5-19**). This, the prophet says, is the fate awaiting Egypt... The motif of the ‘cosmic tree’ that harbors the nations in its branches uses elements from ancient mythology, much as does the oracle of Tyre in the ‘garden of God’ (see **Ezekiel 28:11-19**).” (P. 1548)

Rabbi Fisch entitles **verses 1-9** “Egypt Likened to a Cedar.”

¹⁶⁷⁹

That is, the eleventh year of king Zedekiah’s reign.

¹⁶⁸⁰

Rabbi Fisch states that the third month was “About two months before the capture of Jerusalem.” (P. 207) Hilmer notes that the date given here is “the ninth date in **Ezekiel** (see **1:2; 8:1; 20:1; 24:1; 26:1; 29:1, 17; 30:20**).” (P. 1269)

¹⁶⁸¹

Rabbi Fisch notes that “his crowd” means “the Egyptian people.” (P. 208) Matties holds that it means “his military forces.” (P. 1202)

Reimer comments that “The notice of Pharaoh and his multitude is repeated in **verse 18b**, but there as a statement rather than an address. Likewise, the rhetorical question in **verse 2b** is posed again and expanded in **verse 18a**. This provides an effective frame around the intervening verses.” (P. 1548)

אֶל-מִי דְּמִיתָ בְּגִדְלֶיךָ:

To whom are you likened, in your greatness?¹⁶⁸²

31:3 הִנֵּה אֲשׁוּר אֶרֶז בְּלִבְנוֹן

Look-Assyria, a cedar in the Lebanon--¹⁶⁸³

1682

Rabbi Fisch comments that “Incomparably great and powerful though he might think himself to be, he cannot escape the judgment which God has passed upon him.” (P. 208) We think the question is asked of both Pharaoh and “his crowd,” and therefore is being asked of all Egypt in its national pride. Egypt and its leaders need to look at what has happened to Assyria!

Matties comments that “Without waiting for an answer to the question of **verse 2a**, Ezekiel announces *Assyria* as object of comparison. Then, in a literary caricature, Assyria is portrayed as a cosmic cedar tree (**verse 3b; 17:1-10, 22-24**; see **Daniel 4:10-12**) nourished by deep waters (**verse 4a**)...The allegory exposes its political intent as birds and animals give way to great nations (**verse 6**) who, ironically, are happy to live under the shade of imperial power. Surprisingly, this tree surpasses the trees in the garden of [YHWH] God (see also **28:13**).” (P. 1202)

1683

Here, the allegory / vision-story begins. Of course, Assyria was not in fact a cedar tree in the Lebanon mountain chain–nor in the modern country of Lebanon. Hilmer says to compare “Ezekiel’s allegorical use of the cedar in **chapter 17**.” (P. 1269)

Rabbi Fisch comments that “As the cedar is taller than any other tree in Lebanon, so was Assyria the mightiest people in his time.” (P. 208) See the numerous photographs of huge cedar trees in Lebanon on the Internet. Hilmer notes that Lebanon was “known for its cedars (see **verses 15-18; Judges 9: 15; 1 Kings 4:33; 5:6; 2 Kings 14:9; Ezra 3:7; Psalms 29:5; 92:12 and 104:16**).” (P. 1269)

Rabbi Fisch adds that “Most moderns emend *ashshur* (Assyria) into *te’ashshur*, the tree mentioned in **Isaiah 41:19**, translated *larch*...Thereby they eliminate all reference to Assyria and explain the whole chapter as addressed directly to Pharaoh. Ehrlich, on the other hand, defends the integrity of the Masoretic Text and accepts the Jewish interpretation which is here [in Rabbi Fisch’s commentary] followed.” (P. 208)

Reimer states that “Some find the reference to Assyria problematic, expecting rather immediate application to Egypt. However, the text is stable and clear, and there is no support from the ancient translations for suggested textual corrections (which are themselves not free from interpretative problems.” (Pp. 1548-49)

(continued...)

יִפֵּה עֲנָךְ

beautiful of branch,

וְחֹרֵשׁ מִצֵּל

and wood(en trunk), casting shade,¹⁶⁸⁴

וְגִבֹּהַ קוֹמָהּ

and high-ranking (in) height.

וּבֵין עֲבֹתֵי הַיָּתֵהּ צִמְרֹתָיו׃

And between leafy branches was its tree-top.¹⁶⁸⁵

¹⁶⁸³(...continued)

Hilmer states that Assyria was “a great nation that had fallen. In 609 B.C.E. Pharaoh Neco went to Carchemish to help the Assyrian empire, which was reeling from Babylonian attacks. The effort failed and Assyria passed from history.” (P. 1269)

Yes, the mighty nation of Assyria passed from history. But her people lived on, becoming Babylonians, and many Assyrians undoubtedly served as mercenaries in the Babylonian armies. We can think in terms of Hitler’s Third Reich passing from history in the 20th century. Indeed. But Germany remains, a very strong and important country in Europe in the 21st century.

1684

This line is given varying translations, from “with a shadowing shroud,” to “and shady thickets,” to “and forest shade,” to “overshadowing the forest,” to dense foilage.”

1685

This line is also given varying translations:

King James, “and his top was among the thick boughs.”

Tanakh, “With its top among leafy trees.”

New Revised Standard, “ its top among the clouds.”

New International, “its top above the thick foliage.”

New Jerusalem, “Its top pierces the clouds.”

Rahlf’s, εἰς μέσον νεφελῶν ἐγένετο ἡ ἀρχὴ αὐτοῦ, “into (the) midst of clouds came its top.”

Darr comments that “The prophet holds nothing back in his initial praise of cedar Assyria. Having extolled its branches, shade, and extraordinary height (‘its top [‘crown’] among the clouds’) he proceeds further to elaborate upon each characteristic in reverse order.” (P. 280)

31:4 מַיִם גָּדְלוּהוּ תְהוֹם רָמַמְתֵּהוּ

Waters caused it to grow; deep (water) raised it up;¹⁶⁸⁶

אֶת־נִהְרֵתֶיהָ הִלְךְ סְבִיבוֹת מִטְעָה

with its streams walking / flowing around its place of planting,

וְאֶת־תְּעֵלְתֶיהָ שִׁלְחָה אֶל כָּל־עֵצֵי הַשָּׂדֶה:

and with its water-courses it sent forth to all (the) trees of the field.¹⁶⁸⁷

31:5 עַל־כֵּן גָּבְהָא קָמְתוּ מִכָּל עֵצֵי הַשָּׂדֶה

Therefore its height grew higher than all (other) trees of the field.

וְתַרְבִּינָה סָרַעֲפֹתָיו

and its boughs were many,

וְתַאֲרֻכָנָהּ (פֶּאֶרְתָּו) [פֶּאֶרְתָּיו]

and its branches grew long,

מִמֵּי רַבִּים בְּשִׁלְחוֹ:

1686

This phrase, תְהוֹם רָמַמְתֵּהוּ, which we translate by “deep (water) raised it up,” is given varying translations, from “the deep set him up on high,” to “The deep made it grow tall,” to “deep springs made it grow tall,” to “the deep has made it tall,” to ἡ ἄβυσσος ὑψώσεν αὐτόν, “the abyss raised it up.”

Hilmer thinks the waters meant are “the Tigris and Euphrates

1687

Darr comments that “The waters nourished cedar Assyria, the subterranean deep (see **Genesis 7:11** and **8:2**) made it grow tall, sending its rivers flowing around its bed and (or ‘but’) causing its (manmade) irrigation canals...to release water to ‘all the (other) trees of the field.’...(Therefore) cedar Assyria stood higher than all the other trees of the field. Its boughs grew broad, its branches long, from the great waters...in its conduit.” (P. 280)

from (the) many waters in its sending-forth.¹⁶⁸⁸

31:6 בְּסַעֲפֹתָיו קָנְנוּ כָּל־עוֹף הַשָּׁמַיִם

In its branches nested every bird of the heavens;

וּתַחַת פְּאֲרָתָיו יֵלְדוּ כָּל חַיַּת הַשָּׂדֶה

and beneath its boughs every wild animal of the field gave birth;¹⁶⁸⁹

וּבְצֵלוֹ יֵשְׁבוּ כָּל גּוֹיִם רַבִּים:

and in its shade dwelt everyone of many nations.¹⁶⁹⁰

31:7 וַיִּיף בְּגִדְלוֹ

And it was beautiful in its greatness,

בְּאַרְךָ דְּלִיּוֹתָיו

1688

This last line is given varying translations:

King James, “and sent out her little rivers unto all the trees of the field.”

Tanakh, “Making its channels well up To all the trees of the field.”

New Revised Standard, “sending forth its streams to all the trees of the field.”

New International, “and sent their channels to all the trees of the field.”

New Jerusalem, “sending rivulets to all the wild trees.”

Rahlfs omits the phrase.

Rabbi Fisch states that “the text means that the deep not only supplied the great rivers for the cedar, but also filled the smaller canals which nourished the other trees. In other words, Assyria received an exceptionally large supply from the deep as compared with the other nations and so its might was increased above theirs. This thought is elaborated in the next verse.” (P. 209)

1689

Darr comments that “All the birds of the air nested in it boughs; all the animals gave birth beneath its branches (poignant testimony to their instinctive awareness of the safety the tree affords.” (P. 280) See **Psalm 104:16-17** and **Ezekiel 31:6**.

1690

Ezekiel is drawing the picture of a universal kingdom—all the birds make their nests in its branches, all the beasts of the field gave birth to their young beneath its branches, and in its shadow dwelt everyone of many nations. Compare **Ezekiel 17:23**, with its footnote 686, showing the use of this imagery in both the **Hebrew Bible** and in the **Greek New Testament**.

in (the) length of its branches;

כִּי־הָיָה שָׂרְשָׁיו אֶל־מַיִם רַבִּים:

because its roots were / came to many waters.

31:8¹⁶⁹¹ אֲרָזִים לֹא־עָמְמוּהוּ בְּגַן־אֱלֹהִים

Cedars did not eclipse / dim it in God's garden.¹⁶⁹²

בְּרוֹשִׁים לֹא דָמוּ אֶל־סַעֲפָתָיו

Cypress trees were not like its boughs;

וְעֵרְמוֹנִים לֹא־הָיוּ כַּפְּאֲרֹתָיו

and plane-trees were not like its branches.

כָּל־עֵץ בְּגַן־אֱלֹהִים

Every tree in God's garden

לֹא־דָמָה אֵלָיו בִּיפְיוֹ:

1691

Reimer notes that “The garden of God [גַּן־אֱלֹהִים] is mentioned three times. As in **28:13**...this garden is identified with Eden (also **31:16, 18**). I (God [perhaps YHWH]) made it beautiful, leaving no room for self-exaltation (**verse 9**).” (P. 1549)

Hilmer comments that “the note of pride is introduced (see **verse 10**, and compare **Ezekiel 28:13**).

1692

Rabbi Fisch states that the phrase “garden of God” “here signifies the world (Rashi).” (P. 209) He adds that “There were other great nations in the world, compared with the cypress, etc., contemporaneous with Assyria, but she stood out preeminent among them.” (P. 209)

was not like it in its beauty.¹⁶⁹³

31:9 יִפָּה עֲשִׂיתִיו בְּרֵב דְּלִיּוֹתָיו

I made it beautiful in (the) abundance of its branches;¹⁶⁹⁴

וַיִּקְנְאוּהוּ כָּל-עֵצֵי-עֵדֶן

and all (the) trees of Eden were envious of it,

אֲשֶׁר בְּגַן הָאֱלֹהִים:

which (were) in (the) garden of the God(s)!¹⁶⁹⁵

31:10¹⁶⁹⁶

1693

Darr comments that “**Verse 8** declares that even the cedar, fir, and plane trees growing in the garden of God (see **Genesis 2:9**) cannot rival its beauty...For the prophet’s audience / reader, the trees of paradise (**Genesis 2**) set a standard of perfection that cedar Assyria surpassed nonetheless! This is high praise, indeed, yet no greater than his statement that the king of Tyre, ‘full of wisdom and perfect in beauty’ once resided in ‘Eden, the garden of God’ (**28:12-13**).” (P. 281)

1694

Rabbi Fisch comments that “The supreme position held by Assyria was the work of God.” (P. 210)

Darr agrees, stating that “The author...makes the theological point that Yahweh alone was responsible for the beauty of the cedar with its mass of branches—a beauty so great that even the (personified) trees of Eden were envious.” (P. 281)

1695

Rabbi Fisch states that the phrase “Eden...the garden of God” is here “descriptive of the world which He had created.” (P. 210)

1696

Rabbi Fisch entitles **verses 10-14** “Destruction of Assyrian Supremacy.”

Reimer comments on these verses that “Pride precedes the fall, here brought about by the agency of ‘a mighty one of the nations’ (**verse 11**), paralleled by the ‘most ruthless of nations’ (**verse 12**), elsewhere a cryptic code for Babylon (**28:7**). Those who once prospered in Egypt’s shadow now languish on its remains; no longer is it able to sustain life. The closing mention of ‘those who go down to the pit’ (compare **26:19-21**) provides a bridge into the next paragraph.” (P. 1549)

(continued...)

לָכֵן כֹּה אָמַר יְהוָה אֱדַנִּי יְהוָה

Therefore in this way my Lord YHWH said:

יַעַן אֲשֶׁר גְּבַהֶתָּ בְּקוֹמָה

Because you¹⁶⁹⁷ were high in height,

¹⁶⁹⁶(...continued)

Matties comments that “The problem: pride (see also **28:17**). In a dramatic reversal, this tree will be cut down (**verses 11-12**), abandoned, and no longer serve as a haven for animals (**verse 13**). ‘Rather, its demise will be a warning to all who might consider becoming like it (**verse 14**). The political agenda is revealed again in the allusion to Nebuchadnezzar, his armies, and the abandonment by the peoples of the earth (**verses 11-12**; see also **verse 6b**...The introductory question (**verse 2b**) returns in **verse 18**, but this time without an answer. All trees, all imperial powers including Pharaoh, go to the same place.” (P. 1202)

¹⁶⁹⁷

Rabbi Fisch holds that the second person singular “you” is “addressed to Assyria. The sudden change from the second person to the third in what follows is common in biblical style.” (P. 210)

Matties comments on **32:1-2a** that “dated March 585 B.C.E., this ironic lament begins by accusing Pharaoh of being a sea monster (unlike the dragon image of **29:3**), a creature borrowed from the cosmic conflict of ancient mythology (see also **Psalms 74:12-14**,

12 וְאֱלֹהִים מִלְּכֵי מִקְדָּם

And God (is) my King from of old / former times--

פֹּעֵל יְשׁוּעוֹת בְּקֶרֶב הָאָרֶץ:

Who works salvations / deliverances in (the) midst of the earth!,

13 אַתָּה פּוֹרַרְתָּ בְּעִזָּךָ יָם

You, You divided (the) sea by Your strength;

שִׁבַּרְתָּ רִאשֵׁי תַנִּינִים עַל-הַמַּיִם:

You crushed (the) heads of dragons upon the waters!

14 אַתָּה רִצַצְתָּ רִאשֵׁי לוֹיִתָן

You, You crushed (synonym) Leviathan’s heads!

תַּחַנְנֵנוּ מֵאֲכָל לַעֲם לְצִיִּים:

You gave him (as) food to a people, to desert-dwellers!

Psalms 89:9-11^{Heb} / **8-10**^{Eng},

(continued...)

וַיִּתֵּן צִמְרֵתוֹ אֶל-בֵּין עֲבוֹתָיִם

and He gave / placed your (tree-)top between (its) leafy-foilage;

וְרָם לִבּוֹ בְּגִבְהוֹ:

and his heart was raised / proud in / of his height--¹⁶⁹⁸

31:11 וְאַתְּנָהוּ בְיַד אֵיל גּוֹיִם

¹⁶⁹⁷(...continued)

9 / 8 יְהוָה | אֱלֹהֵי צְבָאוֹת

O YHWH, God of Armies,

מִי-כְמוֹךָ חֲסִין | יְהוָה

who is like You, strong Yah?

וְאַמוֹנַתְךָ סְבִיבוֹתֶיךָ:

And Your true-faithfulness (is) surrounding You.

10 / 9 אַתָּה מוֹשֵׁל בְּגִאוֹת הַיָּם

You are One Ruling over the sea's / ocean's swelling;

בְּשׂוּא גִלְיוֹ אַתָּה תִּשְׁבְּחֵם:

when its waves lift up, You, You still them.

11 / 10 אַתָּה דָּכַאתָ כַּחֲלָל רַהַב

You, You crushed Rahab, like a pierced / dead body;

בְּזִרְעֶךָ עֲזָרְתָּ אוֹיְבֶיךָ:

with Your Arm's strength, You scattered Your enemies.

Instead of depicting a primeval or eschatological conflict, this portrait utilizes the mythic motif to address a historical conflict between [YHWH] and Pharaoh.” (P. 1202)

¹⁶⁹⁸

Darr comments that “The cedar (Hebrew Masoretic Text, ‘you’) towered high; it set its top among the clouds; and its heart was *proud* of its height. On account of its haughtiness, it received from Yahweh the punishment Ezekiel here rehearses: God gave it into the hand of the prince (literally ‘ram’) of the nations; and he, in turn, dealt with it proportionate to its wickedness. The reader, knowing of Babylonia’s role in the collapse of the Assyrian empire and recalling Ezekiel’s previous statements that Nebuchadrezzar is God’s agent of Egypt’s impending demise (29:17-20; 30:10-11, 24-25) identifies this ‘prince’ as the king of Babylon.” (Pp. 281-282)

And I will place him in (the) hand of a chief of nations;¹⁶⁹⁹

עָשׂוּ יַעֲשֶׂה לּוֹ כְּרָשָׁעוֹ

he will truly do to him according to his wickedness.¹⁷⁰⁰

גִּרְשָׁתִּיהוּ:

I have driven him out!

31:12 נִיכְרְתֵהוּ זָרִים עֲרִיצֵי גוֹיִם

And they cut it down—¹⁷⁰¹ foreigners, awe-inspiring / terror-striking nations;¹⁷⁰²

וַיִּטְּשֵׁהוּ

and they forsook / left him,

אֶל-הַהָרִים וּבְכָל-גְּאִיּוֹת נָפְלוּ דְלֵיחוֹתָיו

to / on the mountains and in all (the) valleys his branches fell.

1699

Rabbi Fisch holds that this verse is talking about Nebuchadnezzar. (P. 210) Hilmer says “Probably Nabopolassar; or possibly Nebuchadnezzar.” (P. 1270)

1700

Rabbi Fisch thinks the passage should be translated “he (Nebuchadnezzar) shall deal with him (Assyria) according to (or, in) his wickedness; I (God) have driven him out.’ God has decreed Assyria’s expulsion from His garden; as a mighty Power it will vanish from the scene.” (P. 210) Hilmer states that the wickedness intended is “pride.” (P. 1270) See **verse 10**, and also compare the story of the tower of Babylon in **Genesis 11:1-8**.

1701

Rabbi Fisch comments on the phrase *they cut him off* that “The imagery of the cedar is continued.” (P. 210)

1702

Compare **Ezekiel 28:7**.

וַתִּשְׁבְּרֵנָה פְּאֲרֹתָיו בְּכָל אַפְיָקֵי הָאָרֶץ

And its shoots were broken off in all the earth's / land's wadis / ravines.

וַיֵּרְדוּ מִצֵּלוֹ כָּל-עַמֵּי הָאָרֶץ

And they went down / away from his shadow, all peoples of the earth / land,

וַיִּטְּשׂוּהוּ:

and they forsook Him / it.¹⁷⁰³

31:13 עַל-מִפְּלֹתָיו יִשְׁכְּנוּ כָּל-עוֹף הַשָּׁמַיִם

Upon its fallen remains will settle every bird of the heavens;

וְאֶל-פְּאֲרֹתָיו הָיוּ כָּל חַיֵּי הַשָּׂדֶה:

and to its branches came every wild animal of the field.¹⁷⁰⁴

31:14 לְמַעַן אֲשֶׁר לֹא-יִגְבְּהוּ בְּקוֹמָתָם כָּל-עֵצֵי-מַיִם

In order that no trees (by the) water may be high in their height;

וְלֹא-יִתְּנוּ אֶת-צִמְרֹתָם אֶל-בֵּין עֲבֹתֵיהֶם

and they may not place their (tree-)top between their leafy foliage;

וְלֹא-יַעֲמְדוּ אֲלֵיהֶם בְּגִבְהֵם כָּל-שְׂתֵי מַיִם

and their leaders may not stand in their height, everyone that drinks water.

כִּי-כֻלָּם נִתְּנוּ לַמָּוֶת

Because all of them have been given to the death,

1703

Rabbi Fisch comments that “The fallen cedar is left abandoned as something useless.” (P. 210)

1704

Rabbi Fisch holds that **verse 13** means “The dead of Assyria will become food for birds and beasts of prey.” (P. 211)

אֶל-אֲרֶץ תַּחְתִּית

to (the) land below,¹⁷⁰⁵

בְּתוֹךְ בְּנֵי אָדָם

in (the) midst of (the) children of Adam / Humanity,

אֶל-יֹרְדֵי בֹר:

to those going down (to the) pit.¹⁷⁰⁶

1705

Rabbi Fisch states that *the nether parts of the earth* means *sheol*, “the abode of the dead.” He adds that “the pit” is “another term for *sheol*; and the overall meaning is that “*they are all delivered unto death*. Nations, like human beings, are mortal.” (P. 211)

1706

Rabbi Fisch holds that **verse 14** means “The fall of Assyria should act as a warning to the other nations who may be tempted to follow her example.” (P. 211)

Darr states that “In **verses 10-14**, Ezekiel depicted in metaphorical language the destruction of the magnificent cedar representing Assyria. Now, in a third subunit, he describes the effects of the cedar’s descent to Sheol on nature, the nations, and other inhabitants (trees and humans) of the underworld. The ‘descent to Sheol’ motif appears not only in the present passage, but also in other prophetic oracles against foreign nations and rulers (e.g., **Ezekiel 26:19-21; 28:8**, both against Tyre; **32:17-32**, against Egypt’s pharaoh; **Isaiah 14:9-11, 15-20**, against the king of Babylon)...

“The ruined tree [cedar Assyria] joined others in Sheol—all the trees of Eden (who once envied the cedar, **verse 9**), as well as the choice and best [cedar trees] of Lebanon. All these ‘drinkers of water’ (so also **verse 14a**) were consoled to see that even cedar Assyria shared their fate...” (Pp. 283-284)

Ezekiel is convinced that death is not the final act. No, those who die—including humans, and nations, at the time of death enter into the “underworld,” in Hebrew *Sheol*, in Greek *Hades*. And it is important for Christian readers of Ezekiel to remember that in **1 Peter 3:18-4:6**, the “descent to Sheol / Hades” continues:

¹⁸ For Christ also suffered for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, in order to bring you to God. He was put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit, ¹⁹ in which also he went and made a proclamation to the spirits in prison, ²⁰ who in former times did not obey, when God waited patiently in the days of Noah, during the building of the ark, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were saved through water. ²¹ And baptism, which this prefigured, now
(continued...)

¹⁷⁰⁶(...continued)

saves you--not as a removal of dirt from the body, but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, ²² who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers made subject to him. 4:1 Since therefore Christ suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same intention (for whoever has suffered in the flesh has finished with sin), ² so as to live for the rest of your earthly life no longer by human desires but by the will of God. ³ You have already spent enough time in doing what the Gentiles like to do, living in licentiousness, passions, drunkenness, revels, carousing, and lawless idolatry. ⁴ They are surprised that you no longer join them in the same excesses of dissipation, and so they blaspheme. ⁵ But they will have to give an accounting to him who stands ready to judge the living and the dead. ⁶ For this is the reason the gospel was proclaimed even to the dead, so that, though they had been judged in the flesh as everyone is judged, they might live in the spirit as God does.”

I take the biblical teaching to be that when the physical body dies, the spirit lives in sheol / hades. Death is not the final end. When Jesus died, his spirit entered into sheol / hades, and there he went to the spirits of those who were disobedient in the days of Noah, and preached / proclaimed (ἐκήρυξεν, **1 Peter 3:18**). What was it Jesus preached / proclaimed? **1 Peter 4:6** states that νεκροῖς εὐηγγελίσθη, ἵνα κριθῶσιν μὲν κατὰ ἀνθρώπους σαρκί, ζῶσιν δὲ κατὰ θεὸν πνεύματι, “to dead people, good news was announced, in order that they might be judged indeed according to men / people in (the) flesh, but then might live according to God in (the) spirit.” I understand this to mean that Jesus preached the gospel, the good news, to those “in prison in sheol / hades,” i.e., being punished for their disobedience to God, in order that they might be given “life,” that is “eternal life,” the kind of life that Jesus imparts through the proclamation of the gospel. And this means that the Grace of God is not limited to this life—it continues to work its wonders after death has come. One striking example of this is found in **Ezekiel 16**, where the “whore-cities” of Samaria, Sodom, and Jerusalem, all three of which suffered well-deserved Divine fiery destruction in this life, are said to have their fortunes restored by YHWH, and to have entered into a new covenant with YHWH—something that could only happen if they are restored from sheol / hades / the abode of the dead.

While a ministerial student in Christian College, I spent one summer in Provo, Utah, living among the Mormons, and hearing all sorts of debates between Church of Christ ministers and Mormon leaders. Oftentimes in those debates, this teaching of **1 Peter 3-4** would be introduced, and the Church of Christ ministers would argue against what the passage teaches, while the Mormons would contend for what I think it teaches—it had a lot to do with why the Mormons taught and practiced baptism for the dead. What I quickly learned from those debates was that we were not debating to learn truth—we were debating to win arguments. In those early years, I must have read at least a hundred debates by Church of Christ ministers versus ministers of other Churches, as well as versus atheists. And I saw how debaters would skirt around issues, refusing to admit what passages obviously mean, if it would mean their winning or losing the debate. Their motto seemed to be, Go to any length to win, and prove we are
(continued...)

¹⁷⁰⁶(...continued)

right, and the opposition is wrong. I grew to hate that kind of attitude. I believed, Let the Bible teach what it teaches, whether that upholds our practices and teaching or not. Of course, this holds with reference to **1 Peter 3-4**. In order to prove the Mormons wrong, we were going to all sorts of arguments to prove that the passage says something other than what it is obviously teaching. One way was to add the word “now” to the text of **1 Peter 4:6**, “For this is the reason the gospel was preached even to those who are *now* dead” (**New International**)--that is, it isn’t talking about people hearing the gospel after they have died. It is talking about those who heard the gospel while alive and who now have died. Or the passage from **Hebrews 9:27** was quoted, “It is appointed for man to die once, and after that the judgment,” which was taken to mean that there was simply no way that Jesus could have proclaimed the gospel to the dead, as **1 Peter 3-4** teaches. Another passage was commonly quoted, **Luke 16:26**, which speaks of a great gulf fixed between the righteous dead in paradise and the sinful dead in the flames of torment, i.e., Divine punishment—a gulf which cannot be crossed over. These are examples of the “proof text” use of the **Bible**. When the debaters quoted these “proof texts,” it meant that **1 Peter 3-4** could not possibly mean what it clearly states. I believe what **Hebrews 9:27** states, and what **Luke 16:26** states; but I also believe what **1 Peter 3-4** states. All people die; all people face Divine judgment. Those in sheol / hades are not able to cross over from torment to paradise. But also, Jesus Christ both could and did enter into sheol / hades to proclaim the gospel to those in prison for disobedience, enabling them to be given “life.”

And I ask, Why are we so afraid of the grace of God? I rejoice when I witness notorious sinners—murderers, drug addicts, convicted criminals--hearing the gospel, and entering into new life. And I believe in the God Who is love (1 John 4:8), Who never quits loving His children, even though He has had to punish them, sometimes with death—going to be in sheol / hades, the “nether world.” But their being in sheol / hades doesn’t mean that God, their Father, has quit loving them. British theologians have called this “the greater hope.” The following article on “The Harrowing of Hell” is taken from **Wikipedia** (8/14/2022). It introduces many strange beliefs concerning this matter that we call “The Descent to Sheol / Hades,” but shows how this passage, **1 Peter 3-4** has played on the heart of believers throughout the centuries, leading to all sorts of varying interpretations:

“The **Old Testament** view of the afterlife was that all people when they died, whether righteous or unrighteous, went to Sheol, a dark, still place. Several works from the Second Temple period elaborate the concept of Sheol, dividing it into sections based on the righteousness or unrighteousness of those who have died...The **New Testament** maintains a distinction between Sheol, the common ‘place of the dead,’ and the eternal destiny of those condemned at the Final Judgment, variously described as Gehenna, ‘the outer darkness,’ or a lake of eternal fire.

“The Hellenistic views of heroic descent into the Underworld and successful return follow traditions that are far older than the mystery religions popular at the time of Christ. The **Epic of Gilgamesh** includes such a scene, and it appears also in Homer’s **Odyssey XI**. Writing shortly before the birth of
(continued...)

¹⁷⁰⁶(...continued)

Jesus, Virgil included it in the **Aeneid**. What little we know of the worship in mystery religions such as the Eleusinian Mysteries and Mithraism suggests that a ritual death and rebirth of the initiate was an important part of their liturgy. Again, this has earlier parallels, in particular with the worship of Osiris.

“The Greek wording in the Apostles' Creed [I believe in God the Father almighty, maker of heaven and earth, and in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord, who was conceived from the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary, who suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried, descended into hell, rose again from the dead on the third day, ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of God the Father almighty, who will come again to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen] is κατελθόντα εἰς τὰ κατώτατα, (‘katelthonta eis ta katôtata’), and in Latin is descendit ad inferos. The Greek τὰ κατώτατα (ta katôtata, ‘the lowest’) and the Latin inferos (‘those below’) may also be translated as ‘underworld,’ ‘netherworld,’ or ‘abode of the dead.’

“The realm into which Jesus descended is called Hell, in long-established English usage, but is also called Sheol or Limbo by some Christian theologians to distinguish it from the Hell of the damned. In Classical mythology Hades is the underworld inhabited by departed souls and the god Pluto is its ruler. Some **New Testament** translations use the term ‘Hades’ to refer to the abode or state of the dead to represent a neutral place where the dead awaited the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus.

“The word ‘harrow’ originally comes from the Old English *hergian* meaning ‘to harry or despoil,’ and is seen in the homilies of Aelfric, c. 1000 C.E. The term ‘Harrowing of Hell’ refers not merely to the idea that Jesus descended into Hell, as in the Creed, but to the rich tradition that developed later, asserting that he triumphed over inferos, releasing Hell's captives, particularly Adam and Eve, and the righteous men and women of the **Old Testament** period.

“The Harrowing of Hell is mentioned or suggested by several verses in the **New Testament**:
Matthew 12:40: ‘For just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the sea monster, so for three days and three nights the Son of Man will be in the heart of the earth.’
Acts 2:24: ‘But God raised him up, having freed him from death, because it was impossible for him to be held in its power.’
Acts 2:31: ‘Foreseeing this, David spoke of the resurrection of the Messiah, saying, ‘He was not abandoned to Hades, nor did his flesh experience corruption.’
Colossians 1:18: ‘He is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that he might come to have first place in everything.’
1 Peter 3:18-19: ‘For Christ also suffered for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, in order to bring you to God. He was put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit, in which also he went and made a proclamation to the spirits in prison,’

(continued...)

¹⁷⁰⁶(...continued)

1 Peter 4:6: ‘For this is the reason the gospel was proclaimed even to the dead, so that, though they had been judged in the flesh as everyone is judged, they might live in the spirit as God does.’

“Theologian Hans Urs von Balthasar sees parallels with **Mark 2:24-27**: ‘If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. ²⁵ And if a house is divided against itself, that house will not be able to stand. ²⁶ And if Satan has risen up against himself and is divided, he cannot stand, but his end has come. ²⁷ But no one can enter a strong man’s house and plunder his property without first tying up the strong man; then indeed the house can be plundered.’ That and **Matthew 16:18** (‘And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it.’) speak to Jesus's power and the impotence of Satan.

“The Harrowing of Hell was taught by theologians of the early church: St Melito of Sardis (died c. 180) in his Homily on the Passover and more explicitly in his Homily for Holy Saturday, Tertullian (A Treatise on the Soul, 55; though he himself disagrees with the idea), Hippolytus (Treatise on Christ and Anti-Christ) Origen (Against Celsus, 2:43), and, later, St Ambrose (died 397) all wrote of the Harrowing of Hell. The early heretic Marcion and his followers also discussed the Harrowing of Hell, as mentioned by Tertullian, Irenaeus, and Epiphanius. The 6th-century Christolytes, as recorded by John of Damascus, believed that Jesus left his soul and body in Hell, and only rose with his divinity to Heaven.

“The **Gospel of Matthew** relates that immediately after Christ died, the earth shook, there was darkness, the veil in the Temple was torn in two, and many people rose from the dead, and after the resurrection (**Matthew 27:53**) walked about in Jerusalem and were seen by many people there. Balthasar says this is a ‘visionary and imaginistic’ description of Jesus vanquishing death itself.

“According to the apocryphal **Gospel of Nicodemus**, the Harrowing of Hell was foreshadowed by Christ's raising of Lazarus from the dead prior to his own crucifixion. In the **Acts of Pilate**—usually incorporated with the widely-read medieval **Gospel of Nicodemus**—texts built around an original that might have been as old as the 3rd century A.D. with many improvements and embroidered interpolations, **chapters 17 to 27** are called the Decensus Christi ad Inferos. They contain a dramatic dialogue between Hades and Prince Satan, and the entry of the King of Glory, imagined as from within Tartarus.

"Anglican orthodoxy, without protest, has allowed high authorities to teach that there is an intermediate state, Hades, including both Gehenna and Paradise, but with an impassable gulf between the two. The traditional language of the Apostles' Creed affirms that Jesus ‘descended into hell’; the contemporary **Book of Common Prayer** says that Jesus “descended to the dead” (pp. 53, 96).

“There is an ancient homily on the subject, of unknown authorship, usually entitled **The Lord's Descent into Hell** that is the second reading at the Office of Readings on Holy Saturday in the Roman Catholic Church. The Catechism of the Catholic Church states: ‘By the expression ‘He descended into Hell,’ the Apostles' Creed confesses that Jesus did really die and through his death for us conquered
(continued...)

¹⁷⁰⁶(...continued)

death and the devil 'who has the power of death' (**Hebrews 2:14**). In his human soul united to his Divine person, the dead Christ went down to the realm of the dead. He opened Heaven's gates for the just who had gone before him.' As the Catechism says, the word 'Hell'—from the Norse, Hel; in Latin, infernus, infernum, inferni; in Greek, *Ἅδης* (Hades); in Hebrew, *שְׁאוֹל* (Sheol)—is used in Scripture and the Apostles' Creed to refer to the abode of all the dead, whether righteous or evil, unless or until they are admitted to Heaven (CCC 633). This abode of the dead is the 'Hell' into which the Creed says Christ descended. His death freed from exclusion from Heaven the just who had gone before him: 'It is precisely these holy souls who awaited their Savior in Abraham's bosom whom Christ the Lord delivered when he descended into Hell,' the Catechism states (CCC 633), echoing the words of the Roman Catechism, 1,6,3. His death was of no avail to the damned.

“Conceptualization of the abode of the dead as a place, though possible and customary, is not obligatory (Church documents, such as catechisms, speak of a ‘state or place’). Some maintain that Christ did not go to the place of the damned, which is what is generally understood today by the word ‘Hell.’ For instance, Thomas Aquinas taught that Christ did not descend into the ‘Hell of the lost’ in his essence, but only by the effect of his death, through which ‘he put them to shame for their unbelief and wickedness: but to them who were detained in Purgatory he gave hope of attaining to glory: while upon the holy Fathers detained in Hell solely on account of original sin, he shed the light of glory everlasting.’

“While some maintain that Christ merely descended into the ‘limbo of the fathers,’ others, notably theologian Hans Urs von Balthasar (inspired by the visions of Adrienne von Speyr), maintain that it was more than this and that the descent involved suffering by Jesus. Some maintain that this is a matter on which differences and theological speculation are permissible without transgressing the limits of orthodoxy. However, Balthasar's point here has been forcefully condemned by conservative Catholic outlets.

“In the Eastern Orthodox Church, the Harrowing of Hades is celebrated annually on Holy and Great Saturday during the Vespereal Divine Liturgy of Saint Basil, as is normative for the Byzantine Rite. At the beginning of the service, the hangings in the church and the vestments worn by the clergy are all somber Lenten colors (usually purple or black). Then, just before the Gospel reading, the liturgical colors are changed to white and the deacon performs a censuring, and the priest strews laurel leaves around the church, symbolizing the broken gates of Hell; this is done in celebration of the harrowing of Hades then taking place, and in anticipation of Christ's imminent resurrection.

“The Harrowing of Hades is generally more common and prominent in Orthodox iconography compared to the Western tradition. It is the traditional icon for Holy Saturday, and is used during the Paschal season and on Sundays throughout the year.

“The traditional Orthodox icon of the Resurrection of Jesus, partially inspired by the apocryphal **Acts of Pilate** (4th century), does not depict simply the physical act of Christ coming out of the Tomb,
(continued...)

¹⁷⁰⁶(...continued)

but rather it reveals what Orthodox Christians believe to be the spiritual reality of what his Death and Resurrection accomplished. The icon depicts Jesus, vested in white and gold to symbolize his Divine majesty, standing on the brazen gates of Hades (also called the ‘Doors of Death’), which are broken and have fallen in the form of a cross, illustrating the belief that by his death on the cross, Jesus ‘trampled down death by death’ (see Paschal troparion). He is holding Adam and Eve and pulling them up out of Hades. Traditionally, he is not shown holding them by the hands but by their wrists, to illustrate the theological teaching that mankind could not pull himself out of his original or ancestral sin, but that it could come about only by the work (energia) of God. Jesus is surrounded by various righteous figures from the **Old Testament** (Abraham, David, etc.); the bottom of the icon depicts Hades as a chasm of darkness, often with various pieces of broken locks and chains strewn about. Quite frequently, one or two figures are shown in the darkness, bound in chains, who are generally identified as personifications of Death or the devil.

‘Martin Luther, in a sermon delivered in Torgau in 1533, stated that Christ descended into Hell. The Formula of Concord (a Lutheran confession) states, ‘we believe simply that the entire person, God and human being, descended to Hell after his burial, conquered the devil, destroyed the power of Hell, and took from the devil all his power’ (Solid Declaration, Article X). Many attempts were made following Luther's death to systematize his theology of the descensus, whether Christ descended in victory or humiliation. For Luther, however, the defeat or ‘humiliation’ of Christ is never fully separable from His victorious glorification. Some argued that Christ's suffering was completed with His words from the cross, ‘It is finished.’ Luther himself, when pressed to elaborate on the question of whether Christ descended to Hell in humiliation or victory responded, ‘It is enough to preach the article to the laypeople as they have learned to know it in the past from the stained glass and other sources.’

“John Calvin expressed his concern that many Christians ‘have never earnestly considered what it is or means that we have been redeemed from God's judgment. Yet this is our wisdom: duly to feel how much our salvation cost the Son of God.’ Calvin's conclusion is that ‘If any persons have scruples about admitting this article into the Creed, it will soon be made plain how important it is to the sum of our redemption: if it is left out, much of the benefit of Christ’s death will be lost.’ Calvin strongly opposed the notion that Christ freed prisoners [what 1 Peter 3-4 states], as opposed to traveling to Hell as part of completing his sufferings (**Institutes of the Christian Religion**, Book 2, chapter 16, sections 8-10). The Reformed interpret the phrase ‘he descended into Hell’ as referring to Christ's pain and humiliation prior to his death, and that this humiliation had a spiritual dimension as part of God's judgment upon the sin which he bore on behalf of Christians. The doctrine of Christ's humiliation is also meant to assure believers that Christ has redeemed them from the pain and suffering of God's judgment on sin.

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Main articles: Spirit world (Latter Day Saints) and Plan of salvation (Latter Day Saints). The Harrowing of Hell has been a unique and important doctrine among members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints since its founding in 1830 by
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Joseph Smith, although members of the church (known as ‘Mormons’) usually call it by other terms, such as ‘Christ’s visit to the spirit world.’ Like Christian exegetes distinguishing between Sheol and Gehenna, Latter-day Saints distinguish between the realm of departed spirits (the ‘spirit world’) and the portion (or state) of the wicked (‘spirit prison’). The portion or state of the righteous is often referred to as ‘paradise.’

“Perhaps the most notable aspect of Latter-day Saint beliefs regarding the Harrowing of Hell is their view on the purpose of it, both for the just and the wicked. Joseph F. Smith, the sixth president of the Church, explained in what is now a canonized revelation, that when Christ died, ‘there were gathered together in one place an innumerable company of the spirits of the just... rejoicing together because the day of their deliverance was at hand. They were assembled awaiting the advent of the Son of God into the spirit world, to declare their redemption from the bands of death (D&C 138:12,15-16).

“In the Latter-day Saint view, while Christ announced freedom from physical death to the just, he had another purpose in descending to Hell regarding the wicked. ‘The Lord went not in person among the wicked and the disobedient who had rejected the truth, to teach them; but behold, from among the righteous, he organized his forces...and commissioned them to go forth and carry the light of the gospel to them that were in darkness, even to all the spirits of men; and thus was the gospel preached to the dead...to those who had died in their sins, without a knowledge of the truth, or in transgression, having rejected the prophets’ (D&C 138:29–30,32). From the Latter-day Saint viewpoint, the rescue of spirits was not a one-time event but an ongoing process that still continues (D&C 138; **1 Peter 4:6**). This concept goes hand-in-hand with the doctrine of baptism for the dead, which is based on the Latter-day Saint belief that those who choose to accept the gospel in the spirit world must still receive the saving ordinances in order to dwell in the kingdom of God (**Mark 16:16; John 3:5; 1 Peter 3:21**). These baptisms and other ordinances are performed in Latter-day Saint temples, wherein a church member is baptized vicariously, or in behalf of, those who died without being baptized by proper authority. The recipients in the spirit world then have the opportunity to accept or reject this baptism.

“Although the Harrowing of Hell is taught by the Lutheran, Catholic, Reformed, and Orthodox traditions, a number of Christians reject the doctrine of the ‘harrowing of hell,’ claiming that ‘there is scant scriptural evidence for [it], and that Jesus’s own words contradict it.’ John Piper, for example, says ‘there is no textual [i.e. Biblical] basis for believing that Christ descended into hell,’ and, therefore, Piper does not recite the ‘he descended into hell’ phrase when saying the Apostles’ Creed. Wayne Grudem also skips the phrase when reciting the Creed; he says that the ‘single argument in...favor [of the ‘harrowing of hell’ clause in the Creed] seems to be that it has been around so long...But an old mistake is still a mistake. In his book **Raised with Christ**, Pentecostal Adrian Warnock agrees with Grudem, commenting, ‘Despite some translations of an ancient creed [i.e. the Apostles’ Creed], which suggest that Jesus...’descended into hell,’ there is no biblical evidence to suggest that he actually did so.’

(continued...)

¹⁷⁰⁶(...continued)

“St. Augustine, in his 99th epistle, confesses that this text [**1 Peter 3:18-4:6**] is replete with difficulties. This he declares is clear, beyond all doubt, that Jesus Christ descended in soul after his death into the regions below, and concludes with these words: *Quis ergo nisi infidelis negaverit fuisse apud inferos Christum?* In this prison souls would not be detained unless they were indebted to divine justice, nor would salvation be preached to them unless they were in a state that was capable of receiving salvation.

“The above views share the traditional Christian belief in the immortality of the soul. The mortalist view of the intermediate state requires an alternative view of **Acts 2:27** and **Acts 2:31**, taking a view of the **New Testament** use of Hell as equivalent to use of Hades in the **Septuagint** and therefore to Sheol in the Old Testament. William Tyndale and Martin Bucer of Strassburg argued that Hades in **Acts 2** was merely a metaphor for the grave. Other reformers Christopher Carlisle and Walter Deloenus in London, argued for the article to be dropped from the creed. The Harrowing of Hell was a major scene in traditional depictions of Christ's life avoided by John Milton due to his mortalist views. Mortalist interpretations of the **Acts 2** statements of Christ being in Hades are also found among later Anglicans such as E. W. Bullinger. While those holding mortalist views on the soul would agree on the ‘harrowing of hell’ concerning souls, that there were no conscious dead for Christ to literally visit, the question of whether Christ himself was also dead, unconscious, brings different answers. To most Protestant advocates of ‘soul sleep’ such as Martin Luther, Christ himself was not in the same condition as the dead, and while his body was in Hades, Christ, as second person of the Trinity, was conscious in heaven. To Christian mortalists who are also non-Trinitarian, such as Socinians and Christadelphians, the maxim ‘the dead know nothing’ includes also Christ during the three days. Of the three days, Christ says ‘I was dead’ (Greek *egenomen nekros egenómhyn nekros*, Latin *fui mortuus*). **Revelation 1:18**

“The richest, most circumstantial accounts of the Harrowing of Hell are found in medieval dramatic literature, such as the four great cycles of English Mystery plays which each devote a separate scene to depict it. Christ was portrayed as conquering Satan, and then victoriously leading out Adam and Eve, the prophets, and the patriarchs. The earliest surviving Christian drama probably intended to be performed is the Harrowing of Hell found in the 8th-century Book of Cerne. The subject is found also in the Cornish Mystery plays and the York and Wakefield cycles. These medieval versions of the story derive from scripture, but the details come from the **Gospel of Nicodemus**. In Dante's **Inferno** the Harrowing of Hell is mentioned in Canto IV by the pilgrim's guide Virgil. Virgil was in Limbo (the first circle of Hell) in the first place because he was not exposed to Christianity in his lifetime, and therefore he describes Christ in generic terms as a ‘mighty one’ who rescued the Hebrew forefathers of Christianity, but left him and other virtuous pagans behind in the very same circle. It is clear that Virgil does not fully understand the significance of the event as Dante does. An incomplete Middle English telling of the Harrowing of Hell is found in the Auchinleck manuscript. Although the Orfeo legend has its origin in pagan antiquity, the Medieval romance of Sir Orfeo has often been interpreted as drawing parallels between the Greek hero and Jesus freeing souls from Hell, with the explication of Orpheus' descent and return from the Underworld as an allegory for Christ's as early as the *Ovide Moralisé* (1340). In Stephen
(continued...)

¹⁷⁰⁶(...continued)

Lawhead's novel *Byzantium* (1997), a young Irish monk is asked to explain Jesus Christ's life to a group of Vikings, who were particularly impressed with his 'descent to the underworld' (Helreið). Parallels in Jewish literature refer to legends of Enoch and Abraham's harrowings of the Underworld, unrelated to Christian themes. These have been updated in Isaac Leib Peretz's short story 'Neilah in Gehenna,' in which a Jewish hazzan descends to Hell and uses his unique voice to bring about the repentance and liberation of the souls imprisoned there."

Of course, all of this is quite confusing. However, we think the biblical teaching is not nearly as confusing. Neither the **Hebrew Bible** nor the **Greek Bible** has the word "Hell." What they do have is the Hebrew noun *sheol*, which is translated by the Greek as *hades*. These two words mean the "nether world," the place where the spirits of the dead go when death occurs. Various biblical passages depict the nature of sheol / hades, and indicate that the blessed dead are in "paradise," while the wicked dead are in "prison," suffering varying forms of punishment. And this is where **1 Peter 3-4** comes in. Peter teaches that Jesus, upon dying, went into sheol / hades, to preach the gospel to the spirits in prison, who were disobedient in the days of Noah, so that they might be enabled to share in the life of God. And we believe that if Jesus went to them, he would also have gone to all others in sheol / hades, proclaiming that same good news. Of course, this is speculation; but it is not speculation that Jesus went into sheol / hades to proclaim the gospel to some of those in prison there—according to **1 Peter 3-4**. And I wonder—Why do we want to deny this? Do we think God's grace is incapable of such a thing?

Some say, Well, if I can sin all I please in this life, and then die and go to sheol / hades, and there hear the gospel and be saved, why bother with hearing the gospel here on earth, in this life? Why not just do anything I please, fulfill all the desires of the flesh, and then repent later on in the afterlife?

So, you think sinning is really a good, enjoyable thing, do you? I think you are greatly mistaken. God's revelation offers us "life," the very best life. It enables us to enter into wholesome marriages, with life-long sexual pleasure, with children who know their father and their mother. It teaches us to work hard, to provide for our own families, and to care for the poor. It teaches us to live by love rather than hatred, by humility rather than pride. It invites us to take off one day in seven, to be with our loved ones, and commune with other believers, to join in building strong communities of faith that reach out in loving service to those in need. Can you beat that kind of life?

Is drug addiction, or sexual immorality a better way of life? Is committing crime, and going to prison a better alternative? No—not at all! If you sin, you are going to be punished for it, both in this life, and in the "afterlife," in sheol / hades. Is that what you want?

But how wonderful it is to believe that God's grace reaches out to sinners, seeking us, inviting us, welcoming us—both in this life, and in sheol / hades as well. It doesn't mean that we won't be punished for our sins, but it does mean that God will forgive us, and give us everlasting life, if we will believe the gospel and obey it. What do you believe?

31:15¹⁷⁰⁷ כֹּה־אָמַר אֲדֹנָי יְהוִה

In this way my Lord YHWH spoke:

בְּיוֹם רִדְתּוֹ שְׂאוּלָהּ הָאֵבֶלְתִּי

On (the) day of his going down to *sheol* I caused mourning,¹⁷⁰⁸

כִּסֵּיתִי עָלָיו אֶת־תְּהוֹם

I covered over him with (the) deep.

וְאֶמְנַע נְהַרוֹתֶיהָ

And I withheld its streams.¹⁷⁰⁹

וַיִּכְלְאוּ מַיִם רַבִּים

And many waters were restrained.

וְאֶקְדַּר עָלָיו לְבָנוֹן

And I darkened Lebanon over him.

1707

Rabbi Fisch entitles **verses 15-18** “Assyria’s Fall a Warning to Egypt.”

Reimer comments on **31:15-17** that “While the judgment entailed in these verses echoes the content of those immediately preceding, the attention to Sheol (the place of the dead) prepares the way for the longer reflection on this theme in **32:17-31**.” (P. 1549)

1708

Rabbi Fisch explains that “the subject of ‘he went down’ is Assyria. The nether-world is *sheol* in the Hebrew. Compare the scene described in **Isaiah 14** where the fallen king of Babylon descends to the nether-world.” (P. 211)

1709

Rabbi Fisch comments that “The rivers which *run round about her plantation* (**verse 4**) are now dried up. ‘This deep which had nourished the great cedar is covered with mourning and paralyzed by his fall; she is motionless, her waters congeal’ (Davidson).” (P. 212)

וְכָל-עֵצֵי הַשָּׂדֶה עָלְיוּ עַל-פָּנָה:

And all trees of the field fainted over him.¹⁷¹⁰

31:16 מִקּוֹל מִפֹּלְתוֹ הִרְעַשְׁתִּי גוֹיִם

From (the) sound of his fall, I caused nations to quake;¹⁷¹¹

בְּהוֹרְרִי אֹתוֹ שְׂאוֹלָה

at my bringing him down to sheol,

אֶת-יֹרְדֵי בּוֹר

with those going down (to the) pit.

וַיִּנְחָמוּ בְּאֶרֶץ תַּחְתִּית

And they were comforted in (the) land below / underworld,¹⁷¹²

כָּל-עֵצֵי-עֵדֶן מִבְּחָר וְטוֹב-לְבָנוֹן

all trees of Eden, (the) choice one(s), and good (ones) of Lebanon--¹⁷¹³

1710

Rabbi Fisch comments that “all the trees of the field” represent “other important nations of that time; they are overcome by fear for their own safety.” (P. 212)

1711

Hilmer notes that the nations’ trembling is “As at Tyre’s fall (see **27:35; 28:19**).” (P. 1270)

1712

Rabbi Fisch comments that “The nations whose glory and power lay in the past are comforted by the sign of Assyria joining their company (compare **Isaiah 14:10**, of Babylon).” (P. 212) Hilmer states that it was “Because the mightiest of trees had joined them in the ‘grave’ (*sheol*).” (P. 1270) In Ezekiel’s allegory, nations are “trees.”

1713

Darr comments that “The ruined tree joined others in Sheol—all the trees of Eden (who once envied the cedar; **verse 9**), as well as the choice and best of Lebanon. All these ‘drinkers of water’ (so also **verse 14a**) were consoled to see that even cedar Assyria shared their fate.” (P. 284)

כָּל־שְׁתֵּי מַיִם:

All those drinking waters.¹⁷¹⁴

31:17 גַּם־הֵם אִתּוֹ יִרְדּוּ שְׂאוּלָה

They also with him descended to sheol,

אֶל־חַלְלֵי־חֶרֶב וְזַרְעוֹ

to those pierced by (the) sword¹⁷¹⁵ and His Arm--

יִשְׁבוּ בְּצֵלוֹ בְּתוֹךְ גּוֹיִם:

they sat / dwelt in its / His shadow, in (the) midst of (the) nations.¹⁷¹⁶

31:18 אֶל־מִי דְמִיתַתְּ כְּכֹה בְּכַבֹּד

To whom were you¹⁷¹⁷ like thus, in glory,

וּבְגָדְלָךְ בְּעֵצֵי־עֵדֶן

and in greatness among Eden's trees?

וְהוֹרַדְתָּ אֶת־עֵצֵי־עֵדֶן אֶל־אֶרֶץ תַּחְתִּית

And you will be brought down with Eden's trees to (the) land beneath / underworld!

1714

Rabbi Fisch interprets in terms of all the trees depending upon the deep as the source of sustenance, like Assyria. "They, too, can be cut down and abandoned; so let them not be proud and overconfident." (P. 211)

1715

Hilmer notes that this means "those who met a premature death." (P. 1270)

1716

Rabbi Fisch comments that "With their protector gone, they suffer destruction." (P. 212)

1717

Hilmer observes that the "you" is "the Egyptian pharaoh. 'You too'—it would happen to Pharaoh as it had happened to Assyria." (P. 1270)

בְּתוֹךְ עֲרָלִים תִּשְׁכַּב׃

In (the) midst of (the) uncircumcised you will sleep,

אֶת־חַלְלֵי־חֶרֶב

with those pierced (by the) sword.

הוּא פַרְעֹה וְכָל־הַמִּזְנֶה

That (is) Pharaoh, and all his crowd!¹⁷¹⁸

נֹאם אֲדֹנָי יְהוִה:

(It is) a saying of my Lord YHWH.

1718

Rabbi Fisch comments that “After describing the eminence and decline of Assyria, the prophet reverts to his theme of **verse 2**. If the giant cedar, Assyria, was cut down, can Egypt hope to escape?... The concluding words [‘this is Pharaoh’] indicate that the oracle of this chapter is ultimately directed at Egypt.” (Pp. 212-13)

Darr states, “Ezekiel, whose anti-Egyptian attitude has surfaced time and again in his scroll, presents Egypt’s future destruction as signal evidence of Yahweh’s sovereign control not only of Israel, but also of all mighty nations.” (P. 284)

A Lament Over / Charge Against Pharaoh (32:1-16)

32:1 And it happened in (the) twelfth year, in the twelfth month, on (the) first (day) to / of the month, YHWH's Word was / came to me, saying: 32:2 Son of Adam / Humanity, take up a lament over Pharaoh, king of Egypt; and you shall say to him, You were like a young lion of nations, and you (are) like the dragon in the seas. And you burst forth in your streams / canals, and you stirred up waters with your feet, and you fouled their streams / canals by treading (in them). 32:3 In this way my Lord YHWH spoke: And I will spread out over you My net, with an assembly of many peoples; and they will bring you up with My drag-net (synonym). 32:4 And I will leave you on the earth, upon (the) surface of the field I will throw you. And I will cause all (the) bird(s) of the heavens to settle / dwell upon you, and I will satisfy (the appetite) of all the earth's wild animal(s) by (devouring) you! 32:5 And I will give / place your flesh upon the mountains, and I will fill the valleys (with) your lofty stature; 32:6 and I will give drink (to the) earth—your outpouring of your blood upon the mountains; and water-channels will be filled from your (blood). 32:7 And I will cover (the) heavens with your extinguishing, and I will darken their stars. (The) sun with a cloud I will cover it; and (the) moon will not shine its light. 32:8 All light bearers in the heavens I will darken over you; and I will give / place darkness over your land. (It is) a saying of my Lord YHWH. 32:9 And I will provoke (the) heart of many peoples, when I bring your breaking among the nations, to lands which you did not know. 32:10 And I will cause many people to be appalled over you; and their kings' hair will truly bristle over you, when I cause My sword to fly about upon / before their faces. And they will tremble by the moment, each one for his innermost-being / life, on (the) day of your fall. 32:11 Because in this way my Lord YHWH spoke: (The) sword of (the) king of Babylon will come (to) you (singular)! 32:12 By (the) swords of mighty men, I will cause your crowd to fall—terror-striking nations, all of them. And they will destroy Egypt's pride. And all its crowd will be exterminated! 32:13 And I will cause to be destroyed all her animal(s), from upon / beside many waters. And (the) foot of a human will not stir them up again; and (the) hooves of an animal will not stir them up. 32:14 Then I will cause their waters to sink; and their streams / canals like the oil I will cause to walk / run—(it is) a saying of my Lord YHWH--32:15 when I make (the) land of Egypt a devastation, and a land is made desolate from its fullness; when I strike everyone dwelling in it—and they will know that I (am) YHWH. 32:16 It is a lamentation / funeral dirge, and they will chant it; daughters of the nations will chant it, over / concerning Egypt, and over / concerning all her crowd, they will chant it. (It is) a saying of my Lord YHWH.

A Lament Over / Charge Against Pharaoh (32:1-16)¹⁷¹⁹

1719

Rabbi Fisch entitles **chapter 32** “Final Prophecy Against Egypt.” He comments that “This chapter, which concludes the section dealing with the judgment upon the nations, is dated about one year and a half after the fall of Jerusalem. Israel could now see how vain had been his trust in Egypt, and the prophetic warnings against an alliance with that country had received complete vindication...

(continued...)

¹⁷¹⁹(...continued)

“This realization lends color and force to Ezekiel’s prediction of Egypt’s destruction. Babylon is to be used as the Divine instrument for the execution of judgment upon her. Her calamity will strike terror into the hearts of many peoples who will raise lamentations over her doom. The prophet himself utters a dirge over her ignominious end in sheol where she finds other nations which suffered a similar fate...This chapter is described by Davidson as ‘one of the most weird passages in literature.’” (P. 213)

Pharaoh is like a lion and like a dragon--but YHWH will throw his net over him, and snuff him out--on a day when the typical cosmological occurrences will happen. All of this will be done by YHWH through the use of His sword--the King of Babylon and his armies!

Reimer comments on **32:1-16** that “Like the preceding oracle, this one is firmly bounded by a repeated element, the call to ‘lament’ (**verses 2, 16**)—although the poetic form itself is not strongly marked by this genre [and it hardly sounds like a ‘lament’ or ‘dirge’; rather it sounds more like an announcement of judgment!]. The poem turns on the identification of Pharaoh as a ‘dragon’ (**verse 2**), recalling **29:3**...It is followed by two pronouncements of Divine activity, one in **32:3-10**, which develops the metaphorical world of the ‘dragon,’ and the second in **verses 11-15**, which more briefly and literally applies Divine judgment to Egypt.” (P. 1550)

Darr states, in an overview of **chapter 32**, that “In a manner reminiscent of **chapter 29**, Yahweh will capture the sea creature and cast its enormous carcass into an open field. Its flesh and blood will fill the mountains, valleys, and watercourses of Egypt. Simultaneously, Yahweh will darken the sky’s luminaries, and all who witness the dragon’s demise will be filled with terror.

“**Verses 11-15** speak, in more historical terms, of the vanquishing of Egypt and its inhabitants—human and animal. Though Yahweh is the Ultimate Power behind the nation’s demise, the king of Babylon, God’s agent of punishment, will bring it to ruin. Undisturbed by inhabitants, the waters of the Nile will flow as smoothly as oil.” (P. 286)

Hilmer comments on **verse 1** that it contains “the sixth oracle against Egypt...The date is March 3, 585 B.C.E.; this is the tenth date in [the **Scroll** of] **Ezekiel** (see **1:2; 8:1; 20:1; 24:1; 26:1; 29:1, 17; 30:20; 31:1**). If the **Septuagint** and Syriac are followed (‘eleventh year’), then the chronological order of the Egypt oracles is preserved (and the date would be March 13, 586 B.C.E.).” (P. 1270)

¹⁷²⁰

Rabbi Fisch entitles **verses 1-16** “Dirge Over Pharaoh.” (P. 213) We think the “dirge” or “funeral lament” instead of mourning, simply pronounces judgment after judgment on Pharaoh, with no semblance of grief being expressed.

(continued...)

וַיְהִי בְּשָׁנִי עֶשְׂרֵה שָׁנָה

And it happened in (the) twelfth year,¹⁷²¹

בְּשָׁנֵי-עֶשֶׂר חֹדֶשׁ בְּאַחַד לַחֹדֶשׁ

in the twelfth month, on (the) first (day) to / of the month,¹⁷²²

הָיָה דְבַר-יְהוָה אֵלַי לֵאמֹר:

YHWH's Word was / came to me, saying:

¹⁷²⁰(...continued)

Darr comments that “The prophet begins by observing that Egypt’s king considers himself ‘a lion among the nations’ ...The lion was an established royal symbol in ancient Israel’s world. Not only was it ‘the king of beasts,’ but also its hunting skills and rapacity were well-suited to convey glowing praise of rulers’ victories over their enemies...The reader imagines that Pharaoh would warm to a comparison with a young lion.

“Ezekiel has other ideas, however. He insists that Egypt’s king is actually like a dragon (*tannim*) in the seas. In **29:3**, *tannim* functioned as a metaphor for Pharaoh, the crocodile proudly basking in his Nile canals. Yahweh, the Great Hunter, pierced his jaws with hooks and flung him, along with the fish clinging to his scales, into the desert and certain death. In the present simile, the reader assumes, initially at least, that the croc is back, though now situated in the seas and streams. As he makes his way through the text, however, he will discover that this *tannim* is more bloated sea monster than sinister crocodile. Ezekiel quickly invites his audience to perceive the dragon snorting, thrashing about in its rivers, stirring up the waters with its feet (see **34:18**), and fouling its (Hebrew Masoretic Text, ‘their’) streams. An ecological disaster, it at least appears not too disruptive of life on the land.” (P. 287)

¹⁷²¹

Rabbi Fisch states that the twelfth year should be “reckoned from the beginning of Zedekiah’s reign, the year 584 B.C.E.” (P. 213)

¹⁷²²

Reimer states that “The date formula corresponds to March 585 B.C.E., placing it some time after the fall of Jerusalem and its defining moment in **Ezekiel** at **33:21**, breaking the [**Scroll’s**] chronological sequence in order to follow the thematic gathering of the foreign-nation oracles into a single collection.” (P. 1550)

32:2 בֶּן-אָדָם שָׂא קִינָה עַל-פַּרְעֹה מֶלֶךְ-מִצְרַיִם

Son of Adam / Humanity, take up a lament over Pharaoh, king of Egypt;¹⁷²³

וְאָמַרְתָּ אֵלָיו

and you shall say to him,

כַּפִּיר גֹיִם נְדַמִּיתָ

You were like a young lion of nations,¹⁷²⁴

וְאַתָּה כַּתַּנִּים בַּיָּם

and you (are) like the dragon in the seas.¹⁷²⁵

1723

Rabbi Fisch insists that in this lamentation, “No feeling of pity is implied; it is a ‘doom-song.’” (P. 213) We agree, do you?

1724

Reimer notes that “Egypt may fancy itself a ‘lion,’ a self-delusion like that in **29:3**, but it is a ‘dragon,’ the cosmic beast being associated with the Nile’s crocodile (again, see **29:3**). In the verses that follow, the cosmic and natural elements intermingle, although the metaphorical language predominates.” (P. 1550) Hilmer notes that “lion among the nations” is “a figure for royalty and grandeur (see **19:1-9**).” (P. 1270)

1725

Rabbi Fisch comments that “Egyptian ambition made her think of herself as a lion roaming proudly among the nations and inspiring them with terror, whereas she was in fact like a crocodile (see **Ezekiel 29:3**) whose domain is limited to the waters [or, as may be translated ‘a dragon in the seas’]; it dreamt of far-flung conquests; but she should have restricted herself to her own land.” (P. 213)

We think Rabbi Fisch is reading this contrast between the visions of the young lion and the crocodile into the text. They are not being contrasted—they are simply two visions of who Egypt is, both of them inspiring terror in the observer. Which one do you suppose is the most terrifying—the young lion, prowling in the forest? Or the dragon / crocodile, in the seas? Both are terrifying to an unarmed observer.

וַתִּנַּח בְּנְהַרוֹתָיִךְ

And you burst forth in your streams / canals,¹⁷²⁶

וַתְּדַלְחֵם מַיִם בְּרַגְלֶיךָ

and you stirred up waters with your feet,

וַתְּרַפֵּס נְהַרוֹתָם:

and you fouled their streams / canals by treading (in them).¹⁷²⁷

32:3¹⁷²⁸

1726

Rabbi Fisch thinks this “bursting forth” “may imply that Egypt’s army used to break out beyond the national frontiers to subjugate neighboring peoples. Lofthouse, on the other hand, explains it as ‘blowing water from your nostrils; a further suggestion of the careless pride of the crocodile, as the following words suggest his brutal destructiveness.’” (P. 213)

1727

Rabbi Fisch comments that “The crocodile moved into rivers beyond the Nile, churning up the waters and befouling them.” (P. 214)

1728

Matties comments on **32:3-10**: “Reminiscent of scenes in Babylonian and Canaanite myth (in which Marduk captures Tiamat or Baal snares Yamm), [YHWH] will capture and kill the dragon (**verse 3**). The scale of the defeat is cosmic (**verses 5-6**), including consequences in the heavens (**verses 7-8**) that echo the plague of darkness over Egypt in **Exodus 10:21-24**...The historical reality returns as **verses 9-10** describe the effect among the nations as palpable fear.” (P. 1203)

Reimer comments on **32:3-6** that “Slaying the monster affects the entire landscape. The gorging of the birds and beasts in **verse 4** is a stage beyond settling on the remains of the ‘cosmic tree’ in **31:13**.” (P. 1550)

Darr states that “Both biblical and extrabiblical literature speak of the primeval chaos dragon. Within **Hebrew Scripture**, Yahweh’s battles with this beast are recounted, for example, in:

Job 26:13, “By his wind the heavens were made fair; his hand pierced the fleeing serpent.” (NRS)

Psalms 74:12-14, “¹³ You divided the sea by your might; you broke the heads of the dragons in the waters. ¹⁴ You crushed the heads of Leviathan; you gave him as food for the creatures of the wilderness.” (NRS)

Isaiah 27:1, “On that day the LORD with his cruel and great and strong sword will punish Leviathan the fleeing serpent, Leviathan the twisting serpent, and he will kill the dragon that is in the sea.”

(continued...)

כֹּה אָמַר יְהוָה אֲדַנִּי יְהוָה

In this way my Lord YHWH spoke:

וּפְרִשְׁתִּי עָלֶיךָ אֶת־רֶשֶׁתִּי בְקֶהֱל עַמִּים רַבִּים

And I will spread out over you My net,¹⁷²⁹ with an assembly of many peoples;¹⁷³⁰

וְהֵעִלוּךָ בְּחַרְמוֹי:

and they will bring you up with My drag-net (synonym).

32:4 וְנִטְשְׁתִּיךָ בָאָרֶץ

And I will leave you on the earth,

¹⁷²⁸(...continued)

(NRS)

Isaiah 51:9-10, “Awake, awake, put on strength, O arm of the LORD! Awake, as in days of old, the generations of long ago! Was it not you who cut Rahab in pieces, who pierced the dragon? ¹⁰ Was it not you who dried up the sea, the waters of the great deep; who made the depths of the sea a way for the redeemed to cross over?” (NRS)

“Canaanite mythology describes how Baal snared Yamm (‘Sea’) in his net. The Babylonian Creation Epic [Enuma Elis] recounts Marduk’s victory over Tiamat, the fearsome monster Goddess Whom He catches in His net, kills, and then dismembers. In this passage [**Ezekiel 32**], also, the (fishing) net is the Lord’s weapon of choice, and not the hooks of **29:4**...The capture takes place before witnesses (‘an assembly of many people’); indeed, according to the Hebrew Masoretic Text, they...participate in hauling the monster up in God’s dragnet.” (P. 287)

¹⁷²⁹

Rabbi Fisch comments that “God has decreed to put an end to the crocodile’s harmful activities by catching it in His net.” (P. 214) Compare **Ezekiel 12:13; 17:20**, both of which contain Divine threats of catching human’s in YHWH’s Divine “net,” but containing no mention of crocodiles.

Hilmer comments that “Earlier it was Zedekiah over whom [YHWH’s] net was thrown (see **Ezekiel 12:13; 17:20; 19:8**).” (P. 1270) Yes. YHWH’s treatment of Pharaoh is similar to His treatment of the king of Israel!

¹⁷³⁰

Rabbi Fisch holds that this assembly of many peoples includes “Babylon and her allies.” (P. 214) Compare **verses 11 and 12**.

עַל־פְּנֵי הַשָּׂדֶה אֶטִּילֶךָ

upon (the) surface of the field I will throw you.¹⁷³¹

וְהִשְׁכַּנְתִּי עָלֶיךָ כָּל־עוֹף הַשָּׁמַיִם

And I will cause all (the) bird(s) of the heavens to settle / dwell upon you,

וְהִשְׁבַּעְתִּי מִמֶּךָ חַיַּת כָּל־הָאָרֶץ:

and I will satisfy (the hunger) of all the earth's wild animal(s) by (devouring) you!

32:5 וְנָתַתִּי אֶת־בְּשָׂרְךָ עַל־הַהָרִים

And I will give / place your flesh upon the mountains,

וּמְלֵאתִי הַגְּאֵיֹת רָמוֹתֶיךָ:

and I will fill the valleys (with) your lofty stature;¹⁷³²

32:6 וְהִשְׁקִיתִי אֶרֶץ צְפֹתֶיךָ מִדָּמְךָ אֶל־הַהָרִים

and I will give drink (to the) earth—your outpouring of your blood upon the mountains;

וַאֲפָקִים יִמְלֵאוּן מִמֶּךָ:

and water-channels will be filled from your (blood).¹⁷³³

1731

Compare **Ezekiel 29:5** with its footnote. Hilmer comments that “[YHWH’s] actions here are very similar to those described in **Ezekiel 29:3-5**.” (P. 1270)

1732

Translations of the last phrase of this line vary, from “thy height,” to “your rotting flesh,” to “your carcass,” to “your remains,” to “your corruption.” **Rahlf's** has τοῦ αἵματός σου, “of your blood.”

1733

Translations of **verse 6** vary:

King James, “I will also water with thy blood the land wherein thou swimmest, *even* to the mountains; and the rivers shall be full of thee.”

Tanakh, “I will drench the earth With your oozing blood upon the hills, And the watercourses shall be filled with your *gore*.”

(continued...)

32:7¹⁷³⁴ וְכִסִּיתִי בְּכִבּוֹתֶיךָ שָׁמַיִם

And I will cover (the) heavens with your extinguishing,¹⁷³⁵

וְהִקְדַּרְתִּי אֶת־כְּכֹבְהֵיהֶם

and I will darken their stars.

שֶׁמֶשׁ בְּעָנָן אֶכְסֶנּוּ

(The) sun with a cloud I will cover it;

¹⁷³³(...continued)

New Revised Standard, “I will drench the land with your flowing blood up to the mountains, and the watercourses will be filled with you.”

New International, “I will drench the land with your flowing blood all the way to the mountains, and the ravines will be filled with your flesh.”

New Jerusalem, “I shall water the country with what flows from you, with your blood, on the mountain-sides, and you will fill the ravines.

Rahfs, καὶ ποτισθήσεται ἡ γῆ ἀπὸ τῶν προχωρημάτων σου ἀπὸ τοῦ πλήθους σου ἐπὶ τῶν ὀρέων φάραγγας ἐμπλήσω ἀπὸ σοῦ, “And the earth will be given to drink from your excrements; from your fulness upon the mountains I will fill ravines from you!”

Rabbi Fisch, “I will give (the land) to drink of your out-flowing, (that is) from your blood, to the mountains.”

Rabbi Fisch comments that “The blood of the slain will be poured out upon the land.” (P. 214)

¹⁷³⁴

Reimer comments on **32:7-8** that “The ‘cosmic’ scope of the language is obvious in these heavenly effects of the dragon’s death. The ‘darkness on your land’ again provides allusions to the exodus story (compare **30:13-19**; also **Exodus 10:21-23**).” (P. 1550)

¹⁷³⁵

Rabbi Fisch comments that “According to the Jewish commentators, Egypt is compared to a great fire which, when extinguished, sends up a cloud of smoke obscuring the sky. Modern interpreters think rather of a star which is withdrawn from the heavens (compare **Isaiah 14:12**).” (P. 215)

Hilmer states that the phrase “I will cover the heavens” is “the first of seven clauses threatening the darkness associated with the day of [YHWH] (see **Joel 2:2, 10, 31; 3:15; Amos 5:18-20; Zephaniah 1:15**).” (P. 1271) We agree.

וַיִּרְחַח לֹא־יֵאִיר אֲוֶרֹה:

and (the) moon will not shine its light.

32:8 כָּל־מְאֹרֵי אֹרֶךְ בַּשָּׁמַיִם

All light bearers in the heavens

אֶקְדִּירֶם עָלַיְךָ

I will darken over you;

וְנָתַתִּי חֹשֶׁךְ עַל־אֲרָצְךָ

and I will give / place darkness over your land.¹⁷³⁶

נְאֻם אֲדֹנָי יְהוִה:

(It is) a saying of my Lord YHWH.

32:9¹⁷³⁷ וְהִכְעַסְתִּי לֵב עַמִּים רַבִּים

And I will provoke (the) heart of many peoples,¹⁷³⁸

1736

Rabbi Fisch comments that “The day of Divine judgment is often described by the prophets as an occasion of darkness (compare **Isaiah 13:10**; **Joel 2:10**; **Amos 8:9**).” (P. 215)

1737

Reimer comments on **32:9-10** that “The political dimension is introduced. The more literal language, along with the reference to ‘My sword,’ provides a transition to the second unit.” (P. 1550)

Darr states that “**Verses 9-10** describe the consternation of many peoples when Yahweh brings news of the dragon’s downfall among the nations and even into the most distant of lands (‘countries you have not known’). God will appall these many peoples; their kings’ hair will stand on end (see, similarly, **26:15-16** and especially **27:35**) when the Lord brandishes ‘My sword’ before them. If so ignominious [disgraceful / shameful] a fate could overtake Pharaoh, then they also are vulnerable to Yahweh’s sovereign power.” (P. 288)

1738

Hilmer comments that “This and the next verse reflect the fear brought about whenever great world powers fall, reminding lesser nations that they are even more vulnerable. Compare similar feelings aroused by Tyre’s fall (**26:16-18**; **27:35**; **28:19**).” (P. 1271)

(continued...)

בְּהֵבִיאִי שִׁבְרְךָ בְּגוֹיִם

when I bring your breaking among the nations,¹⁷³⁹

עַל־אֲרָצוֹת אֲשֶׁר לֹא־יָדַעְתֶּם:

upon / to lands which you did not know.¹⁷⁴⁰

32:10 וְהִשְׁמוֹתִי עָלֶיךָ עַמִּים רַבִּים

And I will cause many people to be appalled over you;

וּמַלְכֵיהֶם יִשְׁעֲרוּ עָלֶיךָ שֶׁעַר

and their kings hair will truly bristle over you,

בְּעוֹפְפֵי חַרְבִּי עַל־פְּנֵיהֶם

when I cause My sword¹⁷⁴¹ to fly about upon / before their faces.

וַחֲרָדוּ לְרִגְעִים אִישׁ לְנַפְשׁוֹ

And they will tremble by the moment, each one for his innermost-being / life,

¹⁷³⁸(...continued)

We think the proper fear that should be brought by the fall of world powers is fear of YHWH / God, Who governs the nations, and punishes them for their failures—usually their pride which causes them to concentrate on power and wealth, while forgetting the poor and the needy—leading to their downfall. The way to becoming less vulnerable is to concentrate on sharing wealth and power with the less fortunate and the needy, taking less thought for personal welfare!

¹⁷³⁹

Rabbi Fisch states that “The sense is: ‘when I cause the news of your destruction to come among the nations.’ The verb is employed similarly to **Leviticus 14:2**, where *he shall be brought unto the priest* should be: ‘it (the information about the condition of the leper) is communicated to the priest,’ since the text continues, *And the priest shall go forth out of the camp to make an examination.*” (P. 215)

¹⁷⁴⁰

Rabbi Fisch comments that “The dismay aroused by Egypt’s fall will be felt even in countries unknown to her.” (P. 215)

¹⁷⁴¹

Rabbi Fisch comments that the phrase “My sword” means “Babylon, the instrument of [YHWH’s] judgment, as explained in the next verse.” (P. 215) See **Ezekiel 21:3**.

בְּיוֹם מִפֹּלְתֶיךָ:

on (the) day of your fall.

32:11¹⁷⁴² כִּי כֹה אָמַר אֲדֹנָי יְהוִה

Because in this way my Lord YHWH spoke:

חֶרֶב מִלֶּךְ-בָּבֶל תִּבּוֹאֶיךָ:

(The) sword of (the) king of Babylon will come (to) you (singular)!¹⁷⁴³

1742

Reimer comments on **32:11-13** that “Yet again the agent of [אֲדֹנָי יְהוִה], ‘my Lord YHWH’s’] punishment is identified as the king of Babylon (**verse 11**), once again bearing the sword of [YHWH] (**verse 10**). Here, the demise of Egypt provides an opportunity for nature to recover from its corrupting influence, with the ‘waters’ and ‘rivers’ of **verse 14** pointing back to the initial picture drawn in **verse 2**.” (P. 1551)

Matties comments on **verses 11-15** that “The pride of Egypt is brought to ruin by the king of Babylon (see also **29:19**). The cosmic waters that are troubled (**verse 2**) will be cleared of all troubling feet so that [YHWH] can rejuvenate the waters (**verses 13-14**). Oil (**verse 14**) is a symbol of prosperity (see also **Genesis 27:28; Job 29:6**). Only with Egypt desolate (**verse 15**) can hope for the nations flourish.” (P. 1203)

1743

Hilmer notes that the king of Babylon is Nebuchadnezzar—compare **21:24**^{Heb} / **19**^{Eng},

וְאַתָּה בֶן-אָדָם

And you, Son of Adam / Humanity,

שִׁים-לְךָ | שְׁנַיִם דְּרָכִים

place / mark for yourself two ways

לְבֹא חֶרֶב מִלֶּךְ-בָּבֶל

for (the) coming of (the) king of Babylon’s sword:

מֵאֶרֶץ אֶחָד יֵצְאוּ שְׁנֵיהֶם

from one land the two of them go forth.

וַיַּד בְּרֵאשׁ

And create a hand / sign-post at (the) head / beginning:

דֶּרֶךְ-עִיר בְּרֵא:

Way to a City--create (it).

32:12 בְּחַרְבוֹת גְּבוּרִים אֶפִּיל הַמּוֹנֵךְ

By (the) swords of mighty men, I will cause your crowd to fall–

עֲרִיצֵי גוֹיִם כָּלָם

terror-striking nations, all of them.¹⁷⁴⁴

וְשָׂדְרוּ אֶת־גְּאוֹן מִצְרַיִם

And they will destroy Egypt’s pride.

וְנִשְׁמַד כָּל־הַמּוֹנֵה:

And all its crowd will be exterminated!

32:13 וְהִאַבְדֵתִי אֶת־כָּל־בְּהֵמָתָהּ

And I will cause to be destroyed all her animal(s),

מֵעַל מַיִם רַבִּים

from upon / beside many waters.¹⁷⁴⁵

וְלֹא תִרְלָחֵם רֵגְל־אָדָם עוֹד

And (the) foot of a human will not stir them up again;¹⁷⁴⁶

1744

Rabbi Fisch notes that the “terror-striking nations” is “a designation for the Babylonians.” (P. 216) We add, the Babylonians “and their allies.” See **Ezekiel 28:7**.

1745

Rabbi Fisch comments that “The cattle which used to feed along the banks of the Nile and beside the numerous canals in Egypt will no longer be there, because the desolation of the land will be complete.” (P. 216)

1746

Rabbi Fisch translates the Hebrew adverb עוֹד, (**odh**, by “any more,” then comments that “The Hebrew word...signifies here, as well as in other passages of Scripture, ‘for a long time’ (Kimchi).” (P. 216) Well, yes...because obviously the Nile and its canals have been trodden by human and animal feet across the centuries, ever since the time of Ezekiel. Obviously the prophecy can be interpreted as meaning never again will humans or animals tread these waters. Interpreters of biblical prophecies must take (continued...)

וּפְרָסוֹת בְּהֵמָה לֹא תִדְלָחֶם:

and (the) hooves of an animal will not stir them up.¹⁷⁴⁷

32:14 אֲזֵ אֲשַׁקֵּיעַ מִיַּמֵיהֶם

Then I will cause their waters to sink;

וְנַהֲרוֹתָם כַּשֶּׁמֶן אֹלֵךְ

and their streams / canals like the oil I will cause to walk / run,¹⁷⁴⁸

נֵאֻם אֲדֹנָי יְהוִה:

–(It is) a saying of my Lord YHWH--

¹⁷⁴⁶(...continued)

note, and be very careful in their interpretations! A literalist can easily claim this prophecy is a false prophecy.

¹⁷⁴⁷

Rabbi Fisch comments that “The waters will not be stirred up by the foot of man or beast, because none will be left in the land.” (P. 216) And of course, we have to think in terms of “for some time,” not “forever”!

¹⁷⁴⁸

Rabbi Fisch comments that “As a result of the desolation, Egypt’s waters will remain undisturbed and flow smoothly like a river of oil.” (P. 216)

Texans and Oklahomans will likely interpret this in terms of petroleum oil—something unknown in biblical times. Ezekiel’s first readers would undoubtedly think in terms of olive oil, with its soothing, healing properties.

Hilmer comments on “streams flowing like oil” that “Their surface [is] undisturbed by any form of life. This is the only place in the **Bible** where this eerie metaphor is used to describe desolation.” (P. 1271)

Darr comments that “Henceforth, neither human feet nor cattle hoofs (see **29:11**) will trouble its abundant Nile waters (as did Pharaoh, the sea monster; see **verse 2**). As a consequence, the sediment in their waters will settle, and their streams will run like oil. The motif of streams running like oil is often associated with paradise, where all is peaceful and harmonious. Here, however, the tranquil waters are a by-product of the land’s desolation.” (Pp. 288-289)

32:15 בַּתִּי אֶת־אֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם שְׁמָמָה

when I make (the) land of Egypt a devastation,

וּנְשָׂמָה אֶרֶץ מְמֹלָאָה

and a land is made desolate from its fullness;

בְּהִכּוֹתִי אֶת־כָּל־יוֹשְׁבֵי בָהּ

when I strike everyone dwelling in it–

וַיֵּדְעוּ כִּי־אֲנִי יְהוָה:

And they will know that I (am) YHWH.

32:16¹⁷⁴⁹ קִינָה הִיא וְקוֹנִנּוּהָ

It is a lamentation / funeral dirge, and they will chant it;

בְּנוֹת הַגּוֹיִם תִּקְוִנְנָה אוֹתָהּ

daughters of the nations will chant it,¹⁷⁵⁰

1749

Reimer comments on **32:16** that “The closing verse of the oracle [vision-story] also connects with **verse 2**, providing a literary envelope for the whole oracle [vision-story].” (P. 1551)

1750

Rabbi Fisch notes that “Women used to be engaged professionally to wail.” (P. 218) Compare **Jeremiah 9:16**^{Heb} / **17**^{Eng}

כֹּה אָמַר יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת

In this way YHWH of Armies spoke:

הִתְבּוֹנְנוּ וְקִרְאוּ לַמְקוֹנְנוֹת

Understand! And call for the (professional) mourning women,

וּתְבּוֹאֵינָה

and let them come!

וְאֶל־הַחֲכָמוֹת שְׁלְחוּ

And to the wise women, send forth,

וּתְבּוֹאֵנָה:

and let them come!

(continued...)

עַל־מִצְרַיִם וְעַל־כָּל־הַמּוֹנֵה

over / concerning Egypt, and over / concerning all her crowd,

תִּקְוְנָה אֹתָהּ

they will chant it.¹⁷⁵¹

נֵאֻם אֲדַבְרֵי יְהוָה:

(It is) a saying of my Lord YHWH.¹⁷⁵²

¹⁷⁵⁰(...continued)

Hilmer notes that the “daughters of the nations” means “a world chorus of professional wailers.” (P. 1271)

But we say, What kind of “lament” or “funeral dirge” is this, to be sung by professional wailers? There is no grief expressed, no mourning—only condemnation and judgment of Egypt and the prediction of its destruction in the future!

¹⁷⁵¹

Rabbi Fisch comments on **verse 16** that “As in the beginning (**verse 2**), so at the conclusion of the section, emphasis is laid upon the nature of the oracle against Egypt.” (Pp. 216-17)

¹⁷⁵²

Darr reflects on **32:1-16** that “Ezekiel, who nowhere deigns to utter Pharaoh’s name, here proclaims yet another scathing punishment against Egypt’s king. To Ezekiel’s mind, any attempt by Judah’s ally on the Nile to interfere with Yahweh’s judgment against Israel is an offense against God, an example of arrogance so great as to invite Divine judgment; and any attempt by Judah to place faith in its treaty partner constitutes a betrayal of the fidelity which rightfully belongs only to the Lord. Now, Jerusalem has been destroyed, and the prophet remains determined to convince his fellow exiles that Egypt, too, will meet its doom at the Hand of Yahweh *by* the hand of Nebuchadrezzar...

“Our prophet’s hostility toward Egypt is evident in every verse of the present passage. And when we understand what was at stake for him—convincing his fellow exiles that Judah’s destruction was no sign of Divine weakness or apathy, but part of Yahweh’s world-wide plan of judgment, beyond which Israel could look expectantly toward salvation—we can better see why he spoke as he did. Ezekiel obviously had no theological problem with attributing to God the qualities of a vicious Warrior Who inflicts upon ‘His’ victims the most gruesome and desolating of punishments, for in his view, presumptuous nations were an affront to the Lord’s unrivaled sovereignty. Such, after all, was part and parcel of his ancient Near Eastern worldview and integral to Yahwistic faith. (Consider, for example, the pre-exodus

(continued...)

Egypt Consigned to the Pit Among the Uncircumcised (32:17-32)

32:17 And it happened in the second year, on the fifteenth (day) to / of the month, YHWH's Word was / came to me saying: 32:18 Son of Adam / Humanity, lament over (the) crowd of Egypt, and cause it to descend--with her and (the) daughters of majestic nations--to (the) land below, with those descending (to the) pit. 32:19 From whom were you (more) pleasant? Come down, and be laid to rest with (the) uncircumcised! 32:20 In (the) midst of sword-pierced corpses they will fall. A sword--it was given. They pulled her, and all her crowd. 32:21 Leaders of mighty men will speak from (the) midst of sheol with his helpers: They descended; they slept--the uncircumcised sword-pierced corpses. 32:22 There (is) Assyria, and all her assembly. All around him, his graves--all of them pierced--corpses, the ones falling by the sword, 32:23 where her graves were given / placed in (the) extreme parts of (the) pit. And her assembly surrounding her grave / burial--all of them pierced--corpses, falling by the sword, who gave / spread terror in (the) land of (the) living. 32:24 There (is) Eylam, and all her crowd surrounding her grave / burial--all of them pierced--corpses, the ones falling by the sword, who descended uncircumcised to (the) land below / underworld, who gave / spread terror in (the) land of (the) living. and they bore their reproach with those descending (to the) pit. 32:25 In (the) midst of pierced--corpses they gave / placed a bed for her [Eylam], with all her crowd surrounding it, her graves, all of them uncircumcised, sword-pierced--corpses. Because their terror was given in (the) land of (the) living--and they bore their reproach with those descending (to the) pit, in (the) midst of pierced--corpses it was given / placed. 32:26 There (is) Meshek, Tubhal,¹⁷⁵³ and all her crowd,

¹⁷⁵²(...continued)

plagues inflicted upon Egypt and God's pre-conquest command that the Israelites utterly exterminate the indigenous population of Canaan.)

“In my judgment, we who accord the **Bible** a privileged place within our faith cannot simply avoid these texts by, for example, fleeing to favorite passages within the **New Testament**. Oracles against foreign nations and rulers appear in virtually every prophetic collection within the canon. Their sheer number alone makes them a presence with which we must contend. Ezekiel's oracles against Egypt are fruitfully placed in conversation with, for example, **Isaiah 19**, and with other biblical texts (**Genesis 12:3**; **Isaiah 49:6**; and **John 3:16**).

“A nation brought to its knees is a prime candidate for anger, bitter agony, and the desire for revenge. We hear in Ezekiel's words the outpouring of his people's pain; and we listen for God's Words in his utterances. But the two cannot simply be equated, as if our ways were God's ways. Ezekiel himself spoke of Egypt's limited revival beyond destruction (**29:13-16**)--an astonishing fact given his acrimony toward that nation. His oracles against the nations are a starting place for fruitful dialogue about how we, as diverse children of a single God, can work toward the coming of God's Kingdom on earth, as it is in heaven.” (Pp. 289-290)

¹⁷⁵³

(continued...)

her graves surrounding him--all of them uncircumcised, sword-pierced ones. Because they spread their terror in (the) land of (the) living. 32:27 And they will not sleep with (the) mighty falling men from (the) uncircumcised, who descended (to) sheol with weapons of their war, and they placed their swords beneath their heads. And their iniquity / guilt (was) upon their bones. Because (the) terror of mighty men (was) in (the) land of (the) living. 32:28 And you, in (the) midst of (the) uncircumcised will be broken; and you will sleep / lie with sword-pierced-corpses. 32:29 There (is) Edhom, her kings and all her princes, who were placed in their strength with sword-pierced-corpses; they, with (the) uncircumcised will sleep / lie, and with those descending (to the) pit. 32:30 There (are the) princes of (the) north, all of them, and all (the) Tsidhonians, who descended with (the) pierced-corpses with their terror from their strength, being ashamed; and they slept, uncircumcised, with sword-pierced-corpses. And they bore their reproach with those descending (to the) pit. 32:31 Them, Pharaoh will see, and he will be sorry / have compassion / be consoled over all his crowd, sword-pierced corpses--Pharaoh and all his army. (It is) a saying of my Lord YHWH. 32:32 Because I placed My terror in (the) land of (the) living; and he was caused to sleep in (the) midst of (the) uncircumcised, with sword-pierced corpses--Pharaoh and all his crowd! (It is) a saying of my Lord YHWH.

Egypt Consigned to the Pit Among the Uncircumcised (32:17-32)¹⁷⁵⁴

¹⁷⁵³(...continued)

For Meshech and Tubal see **Ezekiel 27:13**, and **38:2** where they are part of the armies of Gog from the land of Magog.

Hilmer notes that these were two “peoples and territories in Asia Minor.” (P. 1271)

¹⁷⁵⁴

Rabbi Fisch entitles **32:17-32** “Dirge Over the Nation’s Descent to Sheol.” He quotes Lofthouse as writing, “As a dirge over the nations of antiquity nothing could be more striking than this passage. In the last 150 years all the great powers in Ezekiel’s world, except one, had been successively flung down. No such disasters had ever been crowded into a similar period. Babylon herself, though Ezekiel seems not to have expected this, is shortly to fall with a like crash. These sixteen verses are the death-song of the world in which Israel had grown up; in the new world, which was to take its place, the nation of Israel was to be replaced by the church of Judaism.” (P. 217)

Proud Pharaoh's destiny is the grave--just like it has become the destiny of Assyria, Elam, Meshech and Tubal, Edom, the princes of the north, and the Sidonians--Pharaoh and his armies need expect nothing else in their own future!

And what do you make of Lofthouse’s statement that “the nation of Israel was to be replaced by the church of Judaism”? We say that for sure, **Ezekiel** looks forward to a grand and glorious future for Israel, in spite of her sinfulness. It is a future with a new temple, and some will agree that it is “the church of Judaism.”

(continued...)

¹⁷⁵⁴(...continued)

We say, for **Isaiah**, it will be a spiritual future—a heavenly Jerusalem, an exalted Zion, into which all peoples and nations are welcomed, to learn YHWH’s ways of peace, and in which Israel plays the role of YHWH’s “suffering servant,” bearing the sins of others. But for **Ezra** and **Nehemiah**, it will be a physical Jerusalem, with massive walls and gates, reserved for full-blooded Jews alone, with all foreigners and unclean people excluded except for converts--yes, a “church of Judaism,” concentrated on keeping itself pure, fixing its attention on the **Torah** of Moses, with its 613 commandments—and welcoming a new David-like king, who will lead Israel in the conquering of all other nations. What do you think?

And, Where does **Ezekiel** fit in this picture of contrasting views of the “New Israel”? Is his depiction of the new temple that of an armed camp, with massive defensive walls, and guards at every entrance to keep out the unclean and unwanted? Or is it a temple with low walls, and massive entrances, welcoming those who enter, with nothing said of guards? Is it a temple built exclusively for orthodox Jews? And even if it is, is it a temple which, beneath its doors, the water of life trickles, becoming a mighty stream, going to and bringing life to the most death-ridden place on earth? We will be asking this question as we continue in our study of **Ezekiel**.

Reimer entitles **32:17-32** “Egypt’s Descent to the Pit.” He comments that “The seventh and final oracle [vision-story] against Egypt—and the last of the entire foreign-nation oracle collection—returns to a theme introduced briefly in an oracle [vision-story] on the sinking of Tyre in **26:20**, and already used against Egypt in **31:14, 16**...

“In a grand finale, all the nations are gathered together in the pit (**32:18**), in *sheol*, the place of the dead. Egypt joins them there, Pharaoh receiving cold comfort from the welcome he receives (**verse 31**)...Ezekiel is instructed to wail (**verse 18**), not to ‘lament,’ so this dirge lacks the poetic structure of the lament genre. After a leading rhetorical question, which serves as a thematic superscription, Egypt’s reception in *sheol* is described in terms of the ‘welcoming party’—five nations already languishing there. In drawing the nations together in this place over which [YHWH] alone has power, Ezekiel again demonstrates [YHWH’s] sovereignty, poised at this juncture of the [**Scroll**] when Judah’s own death seems assured.” (P. 1551)

Darr comments that “**Verses 19-21** demand the consignment of Pharaoh and his forces to Sheol. Egypt’s kings anticipated an afterlife abounding in the same pleasures they enjoyed on earth. Hence, they arranged to be buried with all of the necessities and finery required to sustain them in royal fashion. Here, however, Ezekiel dooms Pharaoh to the sort of dreary netherworld familiar from biblical, as well as extra-biblical, texts. Consider, for example, the following excerpt from the Mesopotamian myth ‘The Descent of Ishtar to the Underworld’:

To Kurnugi, land of (no return), Ishtar daughter of [the God] Sin was [determined] to go...To the dark house, dwelling of Erkalla’s God, To the house which those who enter cannot leave, On the road where traveling is one-way only, To the house where those who enter are
(continued...)

32:17 וַיְהִי בַשְּׁתֵי עָשָׂרָה שָׁנָה

And it happened in the second year,¹⁷⁵⁵

בַּחֲמִשָּׁה עָשָׂר לַחֹדֶשׁ

on the fifteenth (day) to / of the month,¹⁷⁵⁶

¹⁷⁵⁴(...continued)

deprived of light, Where dust is their food, clay their bread. They see no light, they dwell in darkness...

“In this gloomy, post-mortem existence, the deceased are, in effect, ‘living corpses.’ Conscious, vocal, and able to experience emotions (e.g., shame, disgrace, consolation), they are segregated according to certain criteria—social standing on earth (e.g., royalty or subjects), the circumstances of their deaths and burials (e.g., honorable or dishonorable)—and cognizant of new arrivals. But their lives are only a shadow of former, earthly existence...

“The present passage functions not only as a climax to Ezekiel’s seven pronouncements against Pharaoh / Egypt, but also (by virtue of its references to other countries) as an apt finale to the oracles against foreign nations and rulers gathered in **chapters 25-32**. Consistent with the prophet’s theology throughout his scroll, it presupposes Yahweh’s absolute control of all peoples throughout their histories and even beyond death. Unlike the Mesopotamians, for example, who assigned the realm of the dead to underworld Deities (e.g., King Nergal and Queen Ereshkigal), the prophet asserts that the Lord’s sovereignty extends even to the ‘uttermost parts of the Pit’ (**verse 23**). Death does not release the nations from God’s powerful grip.” (Pp. 290-291)

¹⁷⁵⁵

Compare **verse 1**.

¹⁷⁵⁶

Rabbi Fisch comments that “Presumably the twelfth month as in **verse 1**, so that there is an interval of a fortnight [a period of two weeks] between the two communications.” (P. 217) Reimer agrees, stating that “This oracle [vision-story] occurs two weeks later than the previous one (fifteenth day, compare ‘first day,’ **verse 1**).” (P. 1551)

Hilmer notes that this is “the seventh and last oracle against Egypt...No month is given...The whole year dates from April 13, 586 B.C.E. to April 1, 585 B.C.E. The **Septuagint** [**Rahlfs**] suggests the first month, the 15th day of which would be April 27, 586 B.C.E.” (P. 1271)

הָיָה דְבַר־יְהוָה אֵלַי לֵאמֹר:

YHWH's word was / came to me saying:

32:18 בֶּן־אָדָם נָתַה עַל־הַמּוֹן מִצְרַיִם וְהוֹרְדָהוּ

Son of Adam / Humanity, lament over (the) crowd of Egypt, and cause it to descend--

אוֹתָהּ וּבָנוֹת גּוֹיִם אֲדָרָם

with her and (the) daughters of majestic nations—¹⁷⁵⁷

אֶל־אֲרֶץ תַּחְתִּיּוֹת

to (the) land below,¹⁷⁵⁸

אֶת־יוֹרְדֵי בּוֹר:

with those descending (to the) pit.¹⁷⁵⁹

32:19¹⁷⁶⁰

1757

Rabbi Fisch states that “the daughters of the mighty nations” is “a designation for other states and peoples which experience a similar doom.” (P. 217) See **verse 16**.

1758

Hilmer states that “the earth below” is the “same as ‘grave’ (*sheol*) in **31:15**.” (P. 1271)

1759

Rabbi Fisch comments that “The dirge is to be uttered before the actual event had occurred, and will have the effect of bringing it about...”

“In the shadowy existence which continues after death in subterranean regions, the nations are represented as preserving their collective identity.” (P. 217)

1760

Reimer comments on **32:19** that “The rhetorical question with its implied irony alludes to Tyre’s proud claim in **27:3**, but is framed in a way similar to the question posed to Egypt in **31:2b**. The Egyptians practiced circumcision, thus their place with the uncircumcised would be cause for deep shame.” (P. 15512)

מִמִּי נִעְמָהְ

From whom were you (more) pleasant?¹⁷⁶¹

רָדָה וְהִשְׁכַּבְהָ אֶת־עֲרֻלָּיִם:

Come down, and be laid to rest with (the) uncircumcised!¹⁷⁶²

32:20 בְּתוֹךְ חַלְלֵי־חֶרֶב יִפְּלוּ

In (the) midst of sword-pierced corpses they will fall.

חֶרֶב נְתָנָה

A sword—it was given.

1761

Translations of this line vary from “Whom dost thou pass in beauty?” to “Whom do you surpass in beauty,” to “Are you more favored than others?” The Greek translation (**Rahlfs**) omits the line. We doubt that the verb used here, נִעְמָהְ, has reference to beauty. Rather, we think, it has reference to being “pleasant,” “delightful,” “lovely.” That is, it is more of a personality trait, rather than physical beauty. Perhaps the question means “Whom did you surpass in pleasantness?”

Rabbi Fisch states that “The text has the feminine since Egypt as a nation is addressed. It changes to the masculine when the king is intended. The question implies: even if you were superior to other great powers, you will not escape their fate.” (P. 217)

1762

The Greek translation (**Rahlfs**) completely omits **verse 19**.

Rabbi Fisch’s translation has “Go down.” He comments that it means “Go down to sheol, despite your having surpassed them.” (P. 217)

For the “uncircumcised,” see **Ezekiel 28:10** with its footnote.

Darr comments that “Because both the Phoenicians and the Egyptians practiced circumcision, the prophet’s threats are best interpreted as metaphors for dishonorable death and burial, respectively. In this context also, Egypt is not only consigned to the underworld, but also ordered to bed itself among the ignominious dead—the lest ‘lovely’ of all conceivable surroundings!” (P. 292)

מִשְׁכוּ אוֹתָהּ וְכָל־הַמִּזְנֵיהָ:

They pulled her, and all her crowd.¹⁷⁶³

32:21 יִדְבְּרוּ־לוֹ אֵלֵי גְבוּרִים מִתּוֹךְ שְׂאוֹל אֶת־עֲזָרָיו

Leaders of mighty men will speak from (the) midst of sheol with his helpers.¹⁷⁶⁴

יִרְדּוּ שְׁכֵבוּ הָעֵרְלִים חֲלָלֵי־חָרֶב:

They descended; they slept—the uncircumcised sword-pierced corpses.

32:22¹⁷⁶⁵

1763

The last two lines of **verse 20** are given varying translations:

King James, “she is delivered to the sword: draw her and all her multitudes.”

Tanakh, “*amid those slain by the sword Egypt has been dragged and left with all her masses.*”

New Revised Standard, “Egypt has been handed over to the sword; carry away both it and its hordes.”

New International, “The sword is drawn; let her be dragged off with all her hordes.”

New Jerusalem, “(The sword has been given, it has been drawn.) She and all her throngs have fallen.”

Rahlfs, πρесоῦνται μετ’ αὐτοῦ καὶ κοιμηθήσεται πᾶσα ἡ ἰσχὺς αὐτοῦ, “they will fall with him and all the strength of his will fall asleep.”

Rabbi Fisch states that The prophet is probably addressing the nations already in sheol, exhorting them to drag Egypt down into their midst.” (P. 218)

1764

Rabbi Fisch states that “The leaders of the nations already in sheol are represented as speaking about Pharaoh and his allies on their appearance in their midst, referring to them in the third person in the words that follow...The Egyptians have been reduced to the same condition as the rest of them.” (P. 218)

1765

Matties comments on **32:22-30** that “Except for Edom, all the nations in Sheol have *spread terror in the land of the living*. The expression occurs seven times in **verses 22-32.**” (P. 1204)

Reimer comments on **32:22-23** that “Assyria is the chief of the slain (compare **chapter 31**), but in the uttermost parts of the pit. Ezekiel’s *sheol* knows gradations of shame, and Assyria’s appears to be the deepest.” (P. 1551)

שֵׁם אַשּׁוּר וְכָל-קְהָלָהּ

There (is) Assyria, and all her assembly.¹⁷⁶⁶

סְבִיבוֹתָיו קְבָרָתָיו

All around him, his graves--

כָּלֵם חַלְלִים

all of them pierced-corpses,

הַנִּפְּלִים בַּחֶרֶב:

the ones falling by the sword,

32:23 אֲשֶׁר נָתַנּוּ קְבָרָתֶיהָ בְּיַרְכְּתֵי-בֹר

where her graves were given / placed in (the) extreme parts of (the) pit.

וַיְהִי קְהָלָהּ סְבִיבוֹת קְבָרָתָהּ

And her assembly surrounding her grave / burial--

כָּלֵם חַלְלִים נִפְּלִים בַּחֶרֶב

all of them pierced-corpses, falling by the sword,

אֲשֶׁר-נָתַנּוּ חֲתִית בְּאֶרֶץ חַיִּים:

who gave / spread terror in (the) land of (the) living.

32:24¹⁷⁶⁷

1766

Rabbi Fisch say this is referring to “the nations allied with Assyria.” (P. 218)

Darr states that “Assyria (feminine) is the first of a triad of nations on Ezekiel’s ‘dishonor role’ situated to the north of the Fertile Crescent. She lies, surrounded by the graves of her slain array, in the deepest recesses of the Pit.” (P. 293)

1767

Reimer comments on **32:24-25** that “Elam, in modern terms bordering southern Iraq to the east, was not at this time a notable political power. Its inclusion may be to mark a remote eastern edge of the nations gathered.” (P. 1551)

(continued...)

שֵׁם עֵילָם וְכָל-הַמוֹנֶה סְבִיבוֹת קְבֻרָתָהּ

There (is) Eylam,¹⁷⁶⁸ and all her crowd surrounding her grave / burial--

כָּלֶם חֲלָלִים הַנִּפְּלִים בַּחֶרֶב

all of them pierced-corpses, the ones falling by the sword,

אֲשֶׁר-יָרְדוּ עָרְלִים | אֶל-אֶרֶץ תַּחְתִּיּוֹת

who descended uncircumcised to (the) land below / underworld,

אֲשֶׁר נָתַנוּ חֲתִיתָם בְּאֶרֶץ חַיִּים

who gave / spread terror in (the) land of (the) living.¹⁷⁶⁹

¹⁷⁶⁷(...continued)

Hilmer notes that Elam was “a country east of Assyria; in present-day Iran.” (P. 1271)

¹⁷⁶⁸

Rabbi Fisch notes that Elam, “Once a mighty power, she became subordinated to Assyria. The prophet refers to the time when she was great and powerful.” (P. 218)

Darr states that “The prophet Isaiah portrayed Elam, the second of Ezekiel’s nations in Sheol, as a violent nation accomplished in archery and chariotry (Isaiah 22:6).” (P. 293)

¹⁷⁶⁹

Rabbi Fisch says to compare **Isaiah 22:6** for Elam’s military prowess. An oracle against Elam is found in **Jeremiah 49:35-39**.” (P. 219)

35 כֹּה אָמַר יְהוָה יְצַבֹּאות

In this way YHWH of Armies spoke:

הֲנִי שִׁבַּר אֶת-קֶשֶׁת עֵילָם

Look at Me—breaking Eylam’s bow—

רֵאשִׁית גְּבוּרָתָם:

beginning / first / chief of their strength / might!

36 וְהֵבֵאתִי אֶל-עֵילָם אַרְבַּע רוּחֹת

And I will bring to Eylam four winds,

מֵאַרְבַּע קְצוֹת הַשָּׁמַיִם

from (the) four ends of the heavens,

(continued...)

1769 (...continued)

וּזְרָתִים לְכָל הַרְחֹת הָאֱלֹהִים

and I will scatter them to / by all these winds--

וְלֹא־יִהְיֶה הַגּוֹי אֲשֶׁר לֹא־יָבֹא שָׁם

and there will not be the nation where it will not come there--

נִדְחֵי (עוֹלָם) [עֵילָם]:

those driven out (from) Eylam.

37 וְהִחַתַּתִּי אֶת־עֵילָם לְפָנֵי אֹיְבֵיהֶם

And I will dismay / terrify Eylam before their enemies,

וְלְפָנָיו מִבְּקִשֵׁי נַפְשָׁם

and before those seeking their innermost-being / life!

וְהִבֵּאתִי עֲלֵיהֶם רָעָה

And I will bring over / against them evil--

אֶת־חֲרוֹן אַפִּי

My anger's heat!

נְאֻם־יְהוָה

(It is) a saying of YHWH!

וְשִׁלַּחְתִּי אַחֲרֵיהֶם אֶת־הַחֶרֶב

And I will send forth after them the sword

עַד כְּלוֹתֵי אוֹתָם:

until My finishing them!

38 וְשִׁמַּתִּי כִסְאִי בְעֵילָם

And I will place My throne in Eylam,

וְהִאַבְדֹתִי מִשָּׁם מֶלֶךְ וְשָׂרִים

and I will destroy from there king and officials--

נְאֻם־יְהוָה:

(it is) a saying of YHWH!

39 וְהָיָה בְּאַחֲרֵית הַיָּמִים

And it will happen in (the) latter part of the days--

(אָשִׁיב) [אָשִׁיב] אֶת־[שְׁבִית] [שְׁבוּת] עֵילָם

I will cause to return (the) captivity of Eylam--

נְאֻם־יְהוָה:

(it is) a saying of YHWH!

וַיִּשְׂאוּ כָּל־מַתָּם אֶת־יִזְרְדֵי בּוֹר:

and they bore their reproach with those descending (to the) pit.

32:25¹⁷⁷⁰ בְּתוֹךְ חֲלָלִים נָתַן מִשְׁכָּב לָהּ

In (the) midst of pierced-corpses they gave / placed a bed for her [Eylam],

בְּכָל־הַמּוֹנֶה סְבִיבוֹתָיו קְבָרֶתָהּ

with all her crowd surrounding it, her graves,

כָּל־עַרְלִים חֲלָלֵי־חֶרֶב

all of them uncircumcised, sword-pierced-corpses.

כִּי־נָתַן חֲתִיתָם בְּאֶרֶץ חַיִּים

Because their terror was given in (the) land of (the) living--

וַיִּשְׂאוּ כָּל־מַתָּם אֶת־יִזְרְדֵי בּוֹר

and they bore their reproach with those descending (to the) pit,

בְּתוֹךְ חֲלָלִים נָתַן:

in (the) midst of pierced-corpses it was given / placed.

32:26¹⁷⁷¹ שָׁם מִשֶּׁךְ תּוּבַל וְכָל־הַמּוֹנֶה

There (is) Meshek, Tubhal,¹⁷⁷² and all her crowd,

1770

Rabbi Fisch states that “Much of this **verse [25]** reproduces the preceding. Lofthouse remarks: ‘These repetitions have a special and surprising literary effectiveness.’” (P. 219)

1771

Reimer comments on **32:26-27** that “‘Not...with the mighty’ implies that residence in *sheol* includes distinctions of shame and honor (compare **32:22-23**).” (P. 1552)

1772

For Meshech and Tubal see **Ezekiel 27:13**, and **38:2** where they are part of the armies of Gog from the land of Magog.

Hilmer notes that these were two “peoples and territories in Asia Minor.” (P. 1271)

(continued...)

סְבִיבוֹתָיו קְבֻרוֹתֶיהָ

her graves surrounding him--

כָּלֶם עֲרָלִים מִחֲלָלֵי חָרֶב

all of them uncircumcised, sword-pierced ones.

כִּי־נָתַנוּ חֲתִיתָם בְּאֶרֶץ חַיִּים:

Because they spread their terror in (the) land of (the) living.

32:27 וְלֹא יִשְׁכְּבוּ אֶת־גְּבוּרִים נִפְלִים מִעֲרָלִים

And they will not sleep with (the) mighty falling men from (the) uncircumcised,¹⁷⁷³

אֲשֶׁר יִרְדּוּ־שָׂאוֹל בְּכָל־מַלְחָמָתָם

who descended (to) sheol with weapons of their war,

וַיִּתְּנוּ אֶת־חַרְבֹתָם תַּחַת רִאשֵׁיהֶם

and they placed their swords beneath their heads.¹⁷⁷⁴

וַתְּהִי עֲוֹנָתָם עַל־עֲצָמוֹתָם

And their iniquity / guilt (was) upon their bones.

¹⁷⁷²(...continued)

Darr comments that “In the present passage...Ezekiel depicts Meshech-Tubal also as a dangerous northern power of the past. Consigned to Sheol, it lies with the graves of its uncircumcised and slain horde all about it on account of the terror they spread on earth.” (Pp. 293-294)

¹⁷⁷³

Rabbi Fisch comments that “Meshech and Tubal meet with a more humiliating end than the other nations. The latter, once warlike powers, descend to sheol with their military equipment; but Meshech and Tubal rest among those stripped of their arms. It is not stated what were their exceptional *iniquities* which earned for them this special fate.” (P. 219)

¹⁷⁷⁴

Darr states that “**Verse 27** contrasts Meshech-Tubal’s disgrace with the apparently honorable burial of an obscure fourth group...They were buried with their weapons; their swords lie beneath their heads (a practice otherwise unattested) and their shields (Masoretic Hebrew Text, ‘their iniquities’) upon their bones...The identity of these fallen warriors remains a mystery.” (P. 294)

כִּי־חֲתִית גְּבוּרִים בְּאֶרֶץ חַיִּים:

Because (the) terror of mighty men (was) in (the) land of (the) living.

32:28¹⁷⁷⁵ וְאַתָּה בְּתוֹךְ עֵרְלִים תִּשְׁכַּר

And you,¹⁷⁷⁶ in (the) midst of (the) uncircumcised will be broken;

וְתִשָּׁכַב אֶת־חֲלָלֵי־חֶרֶב:

and you will sleep / lie with sword-pierced-corpses.

32:29¹⁷⁷⁷ שָׁמָּה אֲדוֹם מְלָכֶיהָ וְכָל־נְשִׂאֶיהָ

There (is) Edhom,¹⁷⁷⁸ her kings and all her princes,

אֲשֶׁר־נִתְּנוּ בְּגִבּוֹרָתָם אֶת־חֲלָלֵי־חֶרֶב

who were placed in their strength with sword-pierced-corpses;

הֵמָּה אֶת־עֵרְלִים יִשְׁכְּבוּ

they, with (the) uncircumcised will sleep / lie,

1775

Reimer comments on **32:28** that “The focus of the mourning returns briefly to address Egypt directly.” (P. 1552)

1776

Rabbi Fisch holds that the second person pronoun, אַתָּה, “you,” means “Pharaoh.” (P. 220)

1777

Reimer comments on **32:29-30** that “Edom (verse 29; see **25:12-14**) and the Sidonians (**32:30**; see **28:20-23**) were Judah’s near neighbors to the east and northwest respectively.” (P. 1552)

1778

For Edom, see **Ezekiel 25:12**. For Edom’s kings and princes, see **Genesis 36:31-33**.

Darr comments that “Having described the post-mortem circumstances of three once-powerful Mesopotamian kingdoms, Ezekiel turns to Syro-Palestinian peoples. Edom, Israel’s neighbor / adversary to the south was roundly condemned in **25:12-14** for acting vengefully against the nation of Judah. A second oracle against Edom will appear in **chapter 35**.” (P. 294)

וְאֶת־יֹרְדֵי בּוֹר:

and with those descending (to the) pit.

32:30 שָׁמָּה נְסִיכֵי צָפוֹן כָּלָם

There (are the) princes of (the) north, all of them,¹⁷⁷⁹

וְכָל־צִדְוֹנֵי

and all (the) Tsidhonians,¹⁷⁸⁰

אֲשֶׁר־יָרְדוּ אֶת־חַלְלֵי־לַיִם

who descended with (the) pierced-corpses

בְּחַתִּיתָם מִגְּבוּרָתָם בּוֹשִׁים

with their terror from their strength, being ashamed;

וַיִּשְׁכְּבוּ עֵרְלִים אֶת־חַלְלֵי־חֶרֶב

and they slept, uncircumcised, with sword-pierced-corpses.

וַיִּשְׂאוּ כָּל־מָתָם אֶת־יֹרְדֵי בּוֹר:

And they bore their reproach with those descending (to the) pit.

32:31¹⁷⁸¹

1779

Rabbi Fisch notes that “Ehrlich agrees with Kimchi in interpreting the phrase of the Babylonian satellite kings. The prophet is then deliberately vague because he was living in Babylon. Many moderns understand it as the rulers of Syria.” (P. 220)

1780

Rabbi Fisch states that this is “a general term for the Phoenicians.” (P. 220)

1781

Reimer comments on **32:31-32** that “The oracle [vision-story / vignette] returns full circle (compare **verses 18-21**), affirming Pharaoh’s destiny.” (P. 1552)

Matties states that “Pharaoh, too, has spread terror. He and his military hordes will commiserate with others in Sheol over their collective fate. Since [YHWH] judges all nations, the demise of
(continued...)

אוֹתָם יִרְאֶה פְּרָעָה וְנָחַם

Them, Pharaoh will see, and he will be sorry / have compassion / be consoled¹⁷⁸²

עַל-כָּל-(הַמּוֹנָה) [הַמּוֹנִן] חַלְלֵי-חֶרֶב

over all his crowd,¹⁷⁸³ sword-pierced corpses--

פְּרָעָה וְכָל-חֵילוֹ

Pharaoh and all his army.

נֹאֵם אֲדֹנָי יְהוִה:

(It is) a saying of my Lord YHWH.

32:32 כִּי-נָתַתִּי אֶת-(חַתִּיתוֹ) [חַתִּיתִּין] בְּאֶרֶץ חַיִּים

Because I placed My terror¹⁷⁸⁴ in (the) land of (the) living;

¹⁷⁸¹(...continued)

oppressive military powers is a rhetorical portrait intended to inspire hope in Ezekiel's exilic community." (P. 1204)

¹⁷⁸²

Rabbi Fisch's translation has "shall be comforted." He comments that in **Ezekiel 21:16** the foreign nations derive comfort from Egypt's eclipse; here Egypt expresses sorrow / compassion at the sight of others having shared her doom." (P. 220)

Darr states that "When Pharaoh sees them i.e. the dishonorable circumstances of both large and small nations), he will be consoled concerning all his horde...Pharaoh takes solace in the knowledge that other kingdoms also suffer his ignominious end." (P. 295)

¹⁷⁸³

The Masoretes offer two readings: first, the *kethibh*, "what is written," הַמּוֹנָה; and second, the *qere*, "to be read," הַמּוֹנִן—correction of a mistaken spelling.

¹⁷⁸⁴

The Masoretes offer two readings: first, the *kethibh*, "what is written," חַתִּיתוֹ, "his terror"; and second, the *qere*, "to be read," חַתִּיתִּי, "My terror."

(continued...)

וְהִשְׁכַּב בְּתוֹךְ עֲרֵלִים

and he was caused to sleep in (the) midst of (the) uncircumcised,

אֶת־חַלְלֵי־חֶרֶב

with sword-pierced corpses--

פַּרְעֹה וְכָל־הַמּוֹנֵה

Pharaoh and all his crowd!¹⁷⁸⁵

נֹאֵם אֲדֹנָי יְהוִה:

(It is) a saying of my Lord YHWH.¹⁷⁸⁶

¹⁷⁸⁴(...continued)

Translations of this line vary:

King James, “For I have caused my terror in the land of the living”;

Tanakh, “I strike terror into the land of the living”;

New Revised Standard, “For he spread terror in the land of the living”;

New International, “Although I had him spread terror in the land of the living”;

New Jerusalem, “For having spread terror through the world of the living, he...”

Rahfs, ὅτι δέδωκα τὸν φόβον αὐτοῦ ἐπὶ γῆς ζωῆς, “because I have given the fear of him upon a land of life.”

Rabbi Fisch comments that “Ultimately it is [YHWH’s] might that prevails in the world. The *kethibh* reads ‘his (Pharaoh’s) terror.’” (P. 220)

Obviously, with the Masoretic note, there is great ambiguity in this text. And we wonder, did the Masoretes reject what is written because it gave them difficulty theologically, or because they had textual evidence to choose the *qere*?

¹⁷⁸⁵

Darr comments that “With this statement, Ezekiel ascribes to God the dread-inducing power Egypt’s king has wielded on earth. Now, he and all his multitude will be laid to rest amongst Sheol’s least reputable residents (**verse 32b**).” (P. 295)

¹⁷⁸⁶

Darr reflects on **chapter 32** that it is Ezekiel’s “longest treatment of life beyond earthly existence. Ezekiel’s Sheol (netherworld, Pit) is not ‘hell’—a place of eternal punishment, supervised by Satan, to which the condemned wicked are consigned. Its residents are not tortured, although the dishonorably dead and buried are aware of their status and suffer shame on account of it...

(continued...)

¹⁷⁸⁶(...continued)

“Other biblical texts inform us that the netherworld was regarded as the final resting place of all people, the wicked and the righteous [we think there are texts that predict the entrance of YHWH’s people into His heavenly home]. One thinks, for example, of the deceased judge / prophet Samuel, whom the medium at Endor brought up out of the ground at King Saul’s command (**1 Samuel 28:3-19**). To judge from the present passage, Sheol consisted of separate levels, sections, or compartments. Ezekiel’s almost exclusive focus upon its most disgraceful denizens precludes consideration of its better quarters...

“We can assume that many who witnessed Ezekiel in action, as well as his readers, ancient and modern, knew of the extraordinary efforts of Egypt’s kings to provide themselves, their families, and high-ranking officials with the goods, services, and security required for a comfortable, even abundant, afterlife—witness the pyramid complex at Giza, a wonder of the ancient world. Ezekiel’s consignment of Pharaoh and his horde to the depths of the Pit eviscerates their expectations in the Judeans’ eyes and places Egypt’s fate in Yahweh’s hands. It, like other nations—great and small—is God’s property and can be disposed of as the Lord sees fit. [I remind the reader of Isaiah’s vision in **Isaiah 25** concerning the great feast YHWH is preparing for all people and nations, at which death will be swallowed up forever, and all tears will be removed from humanity’s eyes.]

“For all his ire against his own people, Ezekiel never threatens the house of Israel with the ignominious fate in Sheol that has befallen, or soon will overtake, other nations. Again, we observe what might be called a ‘pastoral’ agenda undergirding his words. His fellow exiles learn, in no uncertain terms, that the power of their God extends beyond Israel to determine the destinies of all people from beginning to end. The collapse of Judah and Jerusalem’s destruction were most easily (if most painfully) interpreted as a sign of Yahweh’s weakness or apathy. But the prophet insists that this is a wrong reading of history. We are astonished by the strength and tenacity of his faith.” (Pp. 295-296)