

# Out of Egypt and Pharaoh's Revenge

Part 2's report by Dr. Yagil Henkin is valuable for so many important reasons. The long range implications, just three or four years out, are ominous for Egypt. To repeat, Ezekiel 29:10-12 makes it quite clear that there will be desolation to come. ***"Behold, therefore, I am against thee, and against thy rivers, and I will make the land of Egypt utterly waste and desolate, from the tower of Syene even unto the border of Ethiopia. No foot of man shall pass through it, nor foot of beast shall pass through it, neither shall it be inhabited 40 years. And I will make the land of Egypt desolate in the midst of the countries that are desolate, and her cities that are laid waste shall be desolate forty years; and I will scatter the Egyptians among the nations, and will disperse, them through the countries."***

Cairo's possible purchase of advanced weapons systems from Russia could become another irritant in U.S.-Egyptian relations. As the crisis in the Ukraine festers, Egyptians are contrasting Washington's support for the popular revolt that toppled President Viktor Yanukovich with U.S. criticism of the coup in Cairo. The prevailing sentiment -- reflected in the op-eds of Egypt's leading dailies -- is that America is inconsistent and unreliable. The Obama administration did great harm in how it dealt with Egypt. The Obama State Department can be credited with the nudging of Egypt toward the Russian power bloc as suggested in open mic remarks where Obama was overheard telling Putin to be patient and that Obama would be able to do more in his second term. I'm suggesting President Obama was collaborating with Russia in the ultimate goal to destroy Israel. That was confirmed by Obama's last act at the U.N. to block Israel.

President Barack Obama apparently decided to go out with a bang: In a stunning diplomatic rebuke of Israel, the United States abstained on a controversial United Nations Security Council resolution demanding an end to Israeli settlements on Palestinian territory, thereby allowing it to pass easily. By abstaining — instead of vetoing the resolution, as the United States has reliably done to similar measures for decades — the Obama administration allowed the highly symbolic measure to make it through the chamber.

It was the first time in nearly 40 years that the Security Council has passed a resolution critical of Israeli settlements. It was also a firm rebuke of both Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who had strongly argued against it, and President-elect Donald Trump, who had taken the highly unprecedented move of weighing in Thursday and pressing for the measure to be vetoed.

This same mistrust of Washington prompted Egyptian military leader Abdul Fattah al-Sisi to choose Russia as the destination of his first visit to a non-Arab country since the July removal of Islamist president Muhammad Morsi. In the wake of that coup, the United States suspended the transfer of some weapons systems to Egypt, spurring Sisi to seek Moscow's help in diversifying the country's sources of military procurement. According to various reports, he inked deals to purchase billions worth of weapons from Russia during the February 12-13 visit. Going forward, those arms sales could erode Israel's qualitative military edge and become yet another irritant in the U.S.-Egyptian relationship, not to mention Israeli's concern for U.S. aide to Egypt.

U.S. security-assistance grants account for 80 percent of the Egyptian military's annual procurement budget. In addition to standardizing Cairo's arsenal and enhancing interoperability with U.S. forces, the arms sales give Washington a small degree of policy leverage with -- and insight into -- Egypt's most important and notoriously opaque institution.

At first glance, Cairo's purchase of Russian weapons would seem unnecessary and perhaps risky given America's ongoing financial commitments to Egypt, which have endured since the 1978 Camp David Accords. Yet Washington's post-coup limitations on several key military systems raised the need to seek a supplemental vendor. Among other systems, the Obama administration put the handover of four F-16s, five Harpoon ship-to-ship missile systems, dozens of M1A1 tank kits slated to be assembled in Egypt, and -- most significantly -- ten Apache attack helicopters on indefinite hold.

For Egypt, which is facing a burgeoning Islamist insurgency in the Sinai Peninsula, obtaining additional Apaches is critical. The American helicopters appear to be Cairo's platform of choice in its Sinai counterterrorism campaign, but availability may be a problem. Routine maintenance schedules typically ground more than a third of its existing force of thirty-five Apaches. U.S. weaponry brings with it relatively high maintenance to keep the Apaches in the air. Complicating matters, Egyptian defense sources note that State Department travel warnings and the sporadic and temporary evacuations of "nonessential" U.S. personnel from Egypt over the past three years have interrupted the crucial ongoing maintenance provided by American contractors.

Details of the deals with Moscow have not yet been confirmed, but the Egyptian press reports indicate that Russian Rostvertol Mi-35 attack helicopters and/or Mi-17 multipurpose helicopters are part of the package. Egypt already has nearly 100 of these aircraft and the older Soviet-era Mi-8 helicopters, which have troop-transport, cargo, signals-intelligence, and attack variants, the latter equipped with 23-mm guns and the capacity to carry 500-kg bombs and

antitank guided missiles. Some of these systems are operating in the Sinai. In late January, for example, Islamist militants used a man-portable air-defense missile (MANPAD) to shoot down an Mi-17 reportedly on a reconnaissance mission over the peninsula, killing five Egyptian soldiers.

Neither Washington nor Israel would likely take issue with the transfer of additional Russian helicopters, since there is broad consensus that Egypt's Sinai counterterror effort might benefit from more of such equipment. Yet other items on Egypt's apparent shopping list are more controversial. For example, Cairo's procurement of advanced S-300 missiles -- as well as MiG fighter jets and Kornet antitank weapons.

For years, Washington and Israel have successfully pressured Russia not to transfer the S-300 to Iran, fearing that its advanced capabilities might preclude a preemptive strike on Iranian nuclear weapons facilities. And in the 2006 Lebanon war, Hezbollah employed Syrian-donated Kornets to great effect against Israeli armor. Clearly, Egypt does not constitute the type of threat represented by Iran and Hezbollah -- Cairo has honored its commitment to peace with Israel for more than three decades. Still, if these platforms are transferred to Egypt, they would degrade Israel's qualitative military edge. And given the fact that Egypt's ignominious record of violating the U.S. Arms Control Export Act, and the idea that Russian MiG technicians might be co-located at bases with U.S.-made F16s, it does not inspire confidence.

Another concern is Saudi Arabia's increasing willingness to use its largesse to signal displeasure with Washington. Along with the United Arab Emirates, Riyadh is underwriting Egypt's purchase of Russian munitions. This contribution follows the kingdom's December announcement that it would provide the Lebanese Armed Forces -- most of whose procurement budget was previously underwritten by Washington -- with \$3 billion to acquire French weapons. Riyadh's decision to fund \$5 billion in Russian and French weapons for traditional U.S. clients is an unmistakable sign of Saudi discontent with U.S. policy on sensitive regional issues, particularly Iran, Syria, and Egypt. The continued U.S.-Saudi discord may enable Cairo to procure unprecedented, highly advanced, and controversial weapons systems despite objections from Washington and Israel.

Egyptian political and military leaders insist that they have no interest in downgrading relations with Washington. They have also acknowledged that Egypt cannot immediately replace its reliance on U.S. weapons even if they were so inclined. But the media's reaction in Egypt to Sisi's Moscow trip suggests that Cairo has strong support for diversifying its weapons suppliers. The real reason might be to squeeze the U.S. for everything it can get, short of arousing Israel's concerns. Washington's rather limited criticism of the Muslim Brotherhood during its year in power, as well as the intensifying swirl of conspiracy theories about the U.S. role in Egypt, have fostered a severely anti-American political atmosphere that may welcome a shift away from Washington. Moreover, Russian president Vladimir Putin's apparent endorsement of a prospective Sisi presidency has fueled popular enthusiasm for stronger relations with Moscow, particularly among the critical mass of Egyptians who supported the July coup. In some quarters, Sisi's outreach to Russia has been favorably compared to former

president Gamal Abdul Nasser's pivot toward the Soviet Union in the 1950s. Indeed, the Egyptian news portal al-Youm al-Sabaa characterized the Russian arms sale as a "rebalancing" of international relations and a "revolution against Washington's policies."

Beyond such populist sentiment, however, some Egyptian analysts view a tilt toward Russia -- even if gradual -- as a reflection of their country's strategic interests. For example, former Egyptian ambassador to Russia and ubiquitous media figure Raouf Saad has argued that the two governments share a common view of terrorism, and that Moscow's close relationship with Ethiopia will help Cairo address concerns regarding the construction of the Renaissance Dam on the Nile. Egyptian military officials have also noted that Russia's absence of conditions on weapons sales makes it a more reliable partner than Washington, which has withheld weapons pending political reform. Deals made with "strings attached" usually prove to be very costly. Still, these and other officials largely believe that a continued relationship with the United States -- notwithstanding its recent hiccups -- remains in Egypt's strategic interest, and they do not advocate a complete shift away from Washington.

Despite reassurances from Egyptian officials, the Russian weapons deals portends a gradual reduction in Washington's ability to control the quality and quantity of weapons that Cairo receives, and to maintain Israel's qualitative military edge in the region. If Egypt does in fact intend to procure more game-changing systems such as the S-300 and the Kornet, Washington should warn Cairo of the risks such an acquisition would pose to U.S. security assistance and the broader bilateral relationship. To be sure, the strategic cooperation and level of trust between Israel and Egypt, particularly on the Sinai, has never been better. But changing the status quo could undermine that trust and perhaps even the Camp David peace treaty.

Moreover, Saudi funding of Egyptian weapons procurements has nullified Washington's policy of tying military aid to political reform. In any event, given that Egypt's current leadership views the conflict with the Muslim Brotherhood and the burgeoning jihadist insurgency in Sinai as existential threats, U.S. efforts to leverage weapons sales for more inclusive governance are unlikely to succeed. While the Obama administration is correct in criticizing Cairo's repressive policies, continuing to withhold military aid will not produce democracy in Egypt, and may carry short-term costs for some of Washington's strategic interests.

Now let's turn to the Biblical picture of Egypt – Out of Egypt and Pharaoh's Revenge.

The nation of Egypt, officially known today as the Arab Republic of Egypt, was at various times in antiquities the greatest political and military power of its age. The many spectacular monuments of Egypt attest to its past power and glory. The biblical story of the Exodus also tells how God miraculously freed His people from what was then the most powerful nation of its time. The Lord has much to say about that actually, and Egypt plays an important role in End Times Bible prophecy. The God of the Bible loves the people of Egypt. He is determined to get their attention and draw them into a personal relationship with Him through faith in the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. The Hebrew Prophet Isaiah speaks of this divine love for Egypt.

The history of Egypt in the Bible goes back much further in time. After the waters of the Noahian Flood subsided, the three sons of Noah (Shem, Ham and Japheth) began to populate the earth. Ham had four sons, and the name of his second son was Mizraim -(Genesis 10:6). He became the father and the beginning of Egypt following the Flood. The word 'Egypt' is found 611X in the King James Bible, and yet as much as the Bible mentions or shares pertaining to Egypt, much is masked in language that really does not tell us a great deal. One of the greatest prophecies in the book of Isaiah is that of the Great Pyramid – Isaiah 19:19-20. When I was doing research for my E-book *'The Season of the Rapture: God's Three-Fold Witness'*, it was revealed that God first gave man the Gospel in Stone, a reference to the Great Pyramid complex. The information on the Great Pyramid is still valid in the larger scope of last days events, and should be taken serious.

Throughout the Old Testament, the name "Egypt" is a translation of the Hebrew word **Mizraim**. Egypt was also known as the Land of Ham because tradition says Ham followed his son into Egypt. The English name "Egypt" comes from the ancient Greek name '**Aigyptos**'.

It is Egypt's history recorded in the books of Genesis and Exodus that is remembered by most people who are familiar with the Bible. What many are not aware of is that God did not finish dealing with the Egyptians over three millenniums ago. Through His prophets, God has given important prophecies describing what will happen to Egypt and what Egypt will do prior to the second coming of Jesus Christ. Actually there are more references to Egypt in Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel as there are in Exodus, which is the book with the most references to Egypt.

Near the end of the period of the two kingdoms of Israel and Judah (700-600 B.C.), the southern kingdom of Judah turned to Egypt for protection from the threatening power of the Assyrian Empire. God inspired the prophets Isaiah and Ezekiel to warn Judah to not put their trust in Egypt, but to put their trust in the Lord who brought their forefathers out of Egypt.

The Egyptians were soon to be conquered by the Assyrians -(Isaiah 20:3-4) and then again later by the Babylonians. Through the prophet Ezekiel, God said, "***I will scatter the Egyptians among the nations***" -(Ezekiel 29:12). Egypt would be uninhabited and scattered for 40 years; but following the 40 years of captivity by the Babylonians, God said He would "***bring back the captives of Egypt and cause them to return***" to Egypt -(Ezekiel 29:13-14). Many native Egyptians, though, would still remain scattered among the various nations (Ezekiel 30:23, 26). The passage of Ezekiel 29:12 is problematic, as there is no evidence this occurred. As such many scholars try to deal with that by teaching 40 years were not literal years, but merely figurative, which I totally reject. Take a look at the evidence for a moment:

One year before Jerusalem was destroyed, God said through the prophet Ezekiel, "***I will make the land of Egypt a desolate waste in the midst of desolated lands; and its own cities will become a desolate waste in the very midst of devastated cities for forty years; and I will***

***scatter the Egyptians among the nations”*** –(Ezekiel 29:12). Yes, Egypt was to become a ***“desolate waste”*** with ***“devastated cities”***, and this would last for ***“forty years”***.

The reason Ezekiel gave such a warning at that time was because many Jews thought they could escape the coming calamity by taking refuge in Egypt. Jeremiah warned them not to flee to Egypt for this very reason. ***“If you yourselves positively set your faces to enter into Egypt... to reside there as aliens, it must also occur that the very sword of which you are afraid will there catch up with you... Do not enter into Egypt... I am sending and I will take Nebuchadrezzar the king of Babylon, my servant... And he must come in and strike the land of Egypt.”*** –(Jeremiah 42:15, 16, 19, 43:10-11)

The desolation did not happen immediately after Ezekiel or Jeremiah made their prophecies. Some Jews did, in fact, flee to Egypt for safety. However, 16 years after the destruction of Jerusalem, Ezekiel announced that the time had come for Nebuchadnezzar to take Egypt.

In ***“the twenty-seventh year... the word of Jehovah occurred to me, saying: “Son of man, Nebuchadnezzar himself, the king of Babylon, made his military force perform a great service against Tyre.”*** For this service, Jehovah rewards the King.

***“Here I am giving to Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon the land of Egypt, and he must carry off its wealth and make a big spoil of it and do a great deal of plundering of it; and it must become wages for his military force. As his compensation for service that he did against her I have given him the land of Egypt, because they acted for me”.*** –(Ezekiel 29:17-20).

Ezekiel 30:10 confirms that it is Nebuchadnezzar who is to remove all the people from that land. ***“I will also cause the crowd of Egypt to cease by the hand of Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon.”***

Remember that earlier, Ezekiel said that the desolation of Egypt would last ***“forty years”***. God also said, ***“At the end of forty years I shall collect the Egyptians together out of the peoples among whom they will have been scattered, and I will bring back the captive group of the Egyptians; and I will bring them back to the land of Pathros, to the land of their origin, and there they must become a lowly kingdom.”*** –(Ezekiel 29:13-14).

So, from the prophecy we discern the following:

1. Egypt would be desolated for 40 years –(Ezekiel 29:12)
2. By Nebuchadnezzar –(Ezekiel 29:18, 30:10)
3. It was desolated after Ezekiel's last prophecy against her in his 27th year of exile. - (Ezekiel 29:18)
4. After the 40 years, Egypt will be a lowly Kingdom. –(Ezekiel 29:14)

When did this happen? From the Bible record we can only assume it happened shortly after Ezekiel said Nebuchadnezzar was given Egypt as compensation for his attack on Tyre. Interestingly, secular chronology agrees. An ancient clay tablet now residing in the British Museum, known as the *“Nebuchadnezzar Inscription”*, talks about Nebuchadnezzar's action against Egypt in his 37th year. That would be two years after Ezekiel said Egypt would be given to Babylon by Jehovah.

Ezekiel delivers his prophecy in 590 B.C., and Nebuchadnezzar's 37th year is two years later in 588 B.C. when he attacks Egypt. We can assume the Nebuchadnezzar Inscription is correct on this point, because it agrees with our Biblical chronology. So Egypt's 40-year desolation begins in that year.

Counting 40 years forward, we arrive at the year 548 B.C. as the end of Egypt's desolation, when Jehovah would *“bring back the captive group of the Egyptians”* for them to become a *“lowly kingdom”*. Indeed, secular chronology also records that the last Babylonian King Nabonidus held an alliance against the Persians with Amasis II, the King of Egypt, in addition to the Lydian Empire. Far from being a competing world power, Egypt is now a *“lowly Kingdom”* just as the Bible said, resorting to military alliances with its previous opponent.

Bible chronology provided more than enough time for all of these events. Egypt has 40 full years of desolation, with more than enough time afterwards to be repatriated and to forge an alliance with Babylon as the secular records claim.

However, the 587-based chronology of Egypt's desolation is a total mess. According to their chronology, the 27th year of Ezekiel's exile (when he made his final prophecy against Egypt) was in 570 B.C. Again, relying on the secular records, Egypt was attacked by Nebuchadnezzar in his 37th year, which is two years later, in 568 B.C.

All fine so far. But wait, just 21 years later the secular records say Egypt forged an alliance with Babylon! Worse still, the secular records say Cyrus conquers Babylon just another 8 years after that. The Bible says that Cyrus let all exiles go when he took power. Did he make an exception, that all exiles could leave and be repatriated except for Egyptians? The Bible doesn't mention anything of the sort.

According to the secular chronology, any such desolation could have only lasted 21 years, perhaps 29 years if you toss out the secular evidence that Egypt forged an alliance with the last Babylonian King. So, there was no 40-year desolation of Egypt. If the 587-based chronology is to be believed, the extensive prophecies of Jeremiah and Ezekiel against Egypt failed miserably! This must then portend to speak of a future event of 40 years to reconcile the discrepancy.

Egypt was not *“removed from its soil”* for four decades at all, the cities were not *“without an inhabitant”*, and the country was, in fact, ruled over by a King who was strong enough to forge an alliance with Babylon and Lydia against the Medo-Persians. The prophecies

of 40 years of desolation with the country being abandoned, are nothing more than a joke. The country even managed to remain independent from the Persian empire after it later conquered Babylon. Some 40 years of desolation and abandonment that turned out to be!

After this time of punishment, Egypt would become ***“a lowly kingdom,” and “the lowliest of kingdoms; it shall never again exalt itself above the nations, for I will diminish them so that they will not rule over the nations anymore”*** -(Ezekiel 29:14-15). This has been the state of Egypt from the sixth century B.C. until the 20th century. Egypt has been mostly occupied by foreign powers and individuals.

Daniel 11 details a long prophecy of conflict between ***“the king of the South”*** and ***“the king of the North.”*** The first four verses explain how the Greek Empire ruled by Alexander the Great would be divided four ways after Alexander’s untimely death at the age of 32. After he died, this prophecy did indeed come to pass. His empire was eventually divided four ways by four of his generals.

The king of the South began with the Greek general, Ptolemy I Soter, who controlled Egypt from Cyrene to Nubia. He assumed the title of pharaoh, and his territory was called the Ptolemaic Kingdom.

The king of the North, Seleucus I Nicator, formerly an officer under Ptolemy I Soter, gained control of the area from the eastern Mediterranean to Babylon and Persia. His area of jurisdiction was called the Seleucid Empire.

The king of the South and the king of the North (and their descendants) fought numerous wars, which eventually resulted in the invasion of Judah and Jerusalem by the king of the North. Around 168 B.C. the first “abomination of desolation” was set up in Jerusalem by the king of the North (Daniel 11:31).

Egypt did not rule over other countries; but under Hellenistic (Greek) rule, Egypt was strong enough to fight off invasions by the king of the North. Egyptians were not in control of their country at that time. They served the descendants of Ptolemy I for almost 300 years until the rising Roman Empire overran them in 30 B.C.

The long prophecy of Daniel 11 is mostly fulfilled prophecy, or history, today. But in the last part of the chapter, the prophecy leaps forward over 2,000 years to the end times before the second coming of Christ.

Let’s now consider what is prophesied to take place ***“at the time of the end”*** -(Daniel 11:40). The verse continues, ***“The king of the South shall attack him; and the king of the North shall come against him like a whirlwind, with chariots, horsemen, and with many ships; and he shall enter the countries, overwhelm them, and pass through.”***



At the ***“time of the end,”*** the king of the North is the revival of the fourth great kingdom described by Daniel in chapters 2 and 7. Many times prophecies in the Bible have a dual meaning and fulfillment. There is the first part that has been fulfilled before the first coming of Christ, and there is the second part that is to be fulfilled prior to the second coming of Christ.

We see in Daniel 11 that the first fulfillment of the king of the South came out of Egypt and is now history. Verse 42 shows that Egypt will also be involved with the second fulfillment of the king of the South.

The prophecy indicates that the king of the South will make a fatal mistake. It says in Daniel 11:40 that the king of the North will “overwhelm” and destroy the king of the South. After entering the “Glorious Land” (Israel), Daniel 11 goes on to say, the king of the North ***“shall stretch out his hand against the countries, and the land of Egypt shall not escape. ... also the Libyans and Ethiopians shall follow at his heels”*** -(Daniel 11:41-43).

Egypt will once again become a subjugated and occupied nation during the end times. The prophet Isaiah speaks of this circumstance: ***“And the Egyptians I will give into the hand of a cruel master, and a fierce king will rule over them,’ says the Lord, the LORD of hosts”*** -(Isaiah 19:4). The time when this prophecy is fulfilled will be when the waters of the Nile ***“will be wasted and dried up”*** and when ***“the rivers will turn foul; and the brooks of defense will be emptied and dried up”*** -(Isaiah 19:5-6).

These prophecies take place during the end times -(Revelation 6:16-17; 8:10-11). Such a time or event as described by Isaiah has not occurred in Egyptian history. The time period is most likely just past the mid-point of Daniel’s 70<sup>th</sup> Week, when the Antichrist takes his place in the rebuilt 3<sup>rd</sup> temple and declares himself God.

The prophet Ezekiel also speaks of this time: ***“For the day is near, even the day of the Lord is near; it will be a day of clouds, the time of the Gentiles. The sword shall come upon Egypt, and great anguish shall be in Ethiopia, when the slain fall in Egypt, and they take away her wealth, and her foundations are broken down”*** -(Ezekiel 30:3-4).

The prophet Isaiah gives an interesting prophecy of God’s mercy when a people cry out to Him for deliverance. He says, ***“For they will cry to the LORD because of the oppressors, and He will send them a Savior and a Mighty One [Christ], and He will deliver them”*** -(Isaiah 19:20).

Apparently, when Christ establishes His earthly rule, not all Egyptians will immediately turn to God after being delivered. The prophet Zechariah says, ***“If the family of Egypt will not come up and enter in, they shall have no rain; they shall receive the plague with which the LORD strikes the nations who do not come up to keep the Feast of Tabernacles. This shall be the punishment of Egypt and the punishment of all the nations that do not come up to keep the Feast of Tabernacles”*** -(Zechariah 14:18-19).

Just as it is for all of us today, when the Egyptians heed God's warning and realize His chastisement is purposeful and loving, then God will be kind and merciful. Isaiah went on to say, ***"And the LORD will strike Egypt, He will strike and heal it; they will return to the LORD, and He will be entreated by them and heal them"*** -(Isaiah 19:22). Apparently, it will be a number of years after Christ returns before this is fulfilled.

Finally, a very remarkable change is coming for Egyptians when they turn completely to Jesus Christ and become converted. Through Isaiah, God predicts a time when He will say, ***"Blessed is Egypt My people, and Assyria the work of My hands, and Israel My inheritance"*** - (Isaiah 19:25).

Despite all of Egypt's idolatrous history and resistance to the one true God, the day will come when God will say, ***"Blessed is Egypt My people."***

Ezekiel provides us one of the larger passages concerning Egypt in Ezekiel chapters 29-32. In order to glean understanding I will do my best to exegete this sizeable piece of literature on the role of Egypt in relationship to Israel. In these three chapters of Ezekiel 29-32, we find there are seven prophecies against Egypt and Egypt is the "seventh" and last nation in God's row of doomed lands. This deliberate use of the number "seven" implies the intensity and finality of Egypt's fall. There are four reasons for the emphasis upon Egypt.

- **First** - it was always the closest to Israel geographically, in comparison to the great powers in the ancient Near East.
- **Second** - Egypt had become internationally active under the twenty-sixth Saite dynasty during Ezekiel's lifetime and had again become involved in Judah's politics and culture.
- **Third** - Egypt always posed a threat for the Hebrew kingdoms in terms of making an alliance with Egypt to ensure security instead of relying upon the Lord.
- **Fourth** - Egypt would come to learn that the true God was the Lord of little Israel/Judah.

Looking back at chapter 28, we find the structure of chapter 28 is broken down into two prophecies:

- vv. 1-16 is a portrait of doom for Egypt
- vv. 17-21 is a prophecy revealing that Egypt would replace Tyre as the major payoff for the Babylonian soldiers.

### **Chapter 29:**

**29:1.** The date is January 7, 587 B.C., which was one year into the siege of Jerusalem by Babylonian forces. ***"The word of the Lord came unto me"*** is called the revelation formula and marks a new prophecy.

**29:2.** *“Son of man Set your face against”* are ominous words and portend bad news ahead. Pharaoh is addressed as the leader and representative for the entire land of Egypt (cf. prophecies to the king of Tyre in 28:2, 12).

**29:3.** *“Thus says the Lord God”* is the messenger formula and verse 3ff employ the ancient literary theme of a dragon/sea monster. The term is used for large sea creatures -(Genesis 1:21) and also for serpents -(Exodus 7:9). The language of mythology was frequently imported into Hebrew poetry. It was a particularly apt simile for Egypt, the age-old enemy, whose sun-god, Re or Ra, claimed to be “self-begotten”. The claim of creation and ownership of the Nile River belongs only to God; hence, this claim is a direct challenge to the sovereignty of the Lord.

**29:4-5.** A vivid prophecy of God’s judgment of Pharaoh and Egypt is depicted in verses 4ff. The series of divine “I will’s” easily counters Pharaoh’s “mine/I” of vs. 3. Like a master fisherman, God catches Pharaoh and his supporting troops, pulls them out and heaves them onto the land to become food for scavenging wildlife.

**29:6-7.** The recognition formula where the knowledge of God can come from his redemption (e.g., 28:26) or from his judgment (as occurs so frequently in Ezekiel).

There is a shift of metaphor from that of a sea monster in verses 3-6 to that of a reed in verses 7ff. As is appropriate for Egypt, the link between the two metaphors is water—from water monsters such as the Nile crocodile to water plants that lined the river’s banks. When Sennacherib’s army attacked Jerusalem in 701 B.C., his field commander told the people of Jerusalem not to trust in any help from Egypt, *“the stuff of this broken reed,... whereon if a man lean, it will go into his hand and pierce it: so is Pharaoh King of Egypt to all that trust in him”* (Isaiah 36:6; cf. 2<sup>nd</sup> Kings 18:21). In 588 B.C. when Zedekiah counted on an Egyptian intervention of the siege of Jerusalem, Pharaoh Hophra did, in fact, feign an attack on the Babylonian forces in Judah, but then went back to Egypt -(Jeremiah 34:21f; 37:11).

**29:8.** *“Therefore”* introduces the sentencing part of Egypt as a worthless reed. The word “sword” represents war with its maiming and killing; it is a common symbol of God’s judgment in the Old Testament (e.g., Deuteronomy 32:41; cf. Ezekiel 21:5).

**29:9-10.** “Desolation” and “waste” are found frequently in Old Testament passages of judgment: of warning to Israel -(Leviticus 26:33), Judah -(Jeremiah. 4:7) or all the nations - (Zephaniah 3:6). They are paired in Jeremiah’s prediction of Egypt’s fall -(Jeremiah 46:19) and describe a land stripped of its inhabitants because of death or exile. But even desolation has a positive consequence for Egypt—the survivors would come to know a small part of the character of God.

In this chapter, Ezekiel depicts Egypt first as a sea monster, then as a useless reed. Here, in verses 9-12 Egypt is depicted as a usurper. This claim to be divine and a god was made in vs. 3 and is repeated here. *“Because”* strengthens God’s accusation of Egypt’s usurping his divine rights and role.

A repetition of the desolate and waste theme from vs. 9, Ezekiel provides a geographical distribution of the coming judgment. The word for “tower” is understood by the modern translations as a proper name of a town, probably in northern Egypt. The phrase creates a north to south expression (cf. “Dan to Beersheba” for the extent of Israel, 2<sup>nd</sup> Samuel 3:10). Aswan (KJV’s “Syene”) is located on the first cataract of the Nile, is a source of red granite for building materials, and was a southern base for military ventures into deeper Africa, such as Cush (ancient Ethiopia, which was a region around the upper Nile in modern Sudan); but the important truth here is that “Syene” did not exist until modern days. Britannica says this: **Aswan High Dam**, (Arabic **Al-Sadd al-‘Ālī**) is a rockfill dam across the Nile River, at Aswān, Egypt and was completed in 1970 (formally inaugurated in January 1971) at a cost of about \$1 billion. The 364 foot (111 metres) high dam, with a crest length of 12,562 feet (3,830 metres) and a volume of 57,940,000 cubic yards (44,300,000 cubic metres), impounds a reservoir for Lake Nasser, that has a gross capacity of 5.97 trillion cubic feet (169 billion cubic metres). Of the Nile’s total annual discharge, some 2.6 trillion cubic feet (74 billion cubic metres) of water have been allocated by treaty between Egypt and Sudan, with about 1.96 trillion cubic feet (55.5 billion cubic metres) apportioned to Egypt and the remainder to Sudan. Lake Nasser backs up the Nile about 200 miles (320 km) in Egypt and is almost 100 miles (160 km) farther upstream (south) in Sudan. Creation of the reservoir necessitated the costly relocation of the ancient Egyptian temple complex of Abu Simbel, which would otherwise have been submerged. Ninety thousand Egyptian fellahin (peasants) and Sudanese Nubian nomads had to be relocated. Fifty thousand Egyptians were transported to the Kawm Umbū valley, 30 miles (50 km) north of Aswān, to form a new agricultural zone called Nubaria, and most of the Sudanese were resettled around Khashm al-Qirbah, Sudan.

**29:11-12.** Since we know that Egypt was not literally devoid of human occupation for any forty-year period in its history since Ezekiel, some suggest the number could be taken as figurative, signifying a period of trial similar to that of Israel. Or a second possibility exists where the forty-year period is in the future. This is the more probable understanding. Note that the language of dispersing and scattering the Egyptians is the same as what God promised to do to the Hebrew people -(Ezek. 12:15; 22:15) and will be repeated with Egypt again -(30:23, 26).

**29:13.** Just as God promised Judah a period of seventy years of being scattered in exile ending in a return to their land -(Jeremiah 29:10), so God promised Egypt an end of its judgment and a time of restoration that would come. -(cf. Isaiah. 19:18-22). Those who attempt to use dates in the figurative sense rather than literal ultimately get twisted into all kinds of binds. Do not forget when one reads dates in English, it is based upon definitive Greek or Hebrew in this case.

**29:14.** Upper Egypt is in fact southern Egypt and is a much more desolate region than Lower Egypt. It is called “upper” because the Nile River flows out of the heart of Egypt northward to the Mediterranean Sea. “Lower” Egypt is where the Nile fans out into its delta, and where the bulk of the Egyptian population has always lived.

**29:15.** Ezekiel employs a bit of hyperbole, “basest of the kingdoms,” to describe the demotion of Egypt from the top rank of nations. After the Babylonian incursions, there were the Persian attacks and eventually the Greek attacks. Foreigners would soon come to dominate the land. Ancient Egypt was the “bread basket” of the region, and supplier of grains for the ancient world.

**29:16.** The future weak condition of Egypt suits the former weak role it had played in its alliance with Judah. “Security,” for Israel should have been in the Lord -(Psalm 40:4; Jeremiah 17:7), rather than in Egypt. In the future, there would be no temptation to trust in a weakened land.

**29:17.** Verses 17-21 begin with a date (the Jewish religious New Year; April 26, 571 B.C.) and the revelation formula that signals a new prophecy. The date is significant since this message is the latest dated prophecy in the entire Book of Ezekiel, obviously revealing that the Book of Ezekiel is not organized only on the basis of chronology.

**29:18.** Babylonian forces had laid siege to Jerusalem from 586-573 B.C. without complete success. Tyre’s mainland city had been captured, but not its island citadel where much of Tyre’s riches had been safely taken. The imagery of Babylon’s effort to take Tyre, bare heads and sore shoulders, pictures the daily grind of the soldiers’ labor to take Tyre. The pay for a soldier in the ancient world, and in much of history since, was the dividing of booty taken in victory. To have no victory meant no promised wealth. That could lead to a disgruntled army and trouble for its commanders. Failure was not a viable option!

**29:19-20.** Into this crisis came Ezekiel’s prophecy, although it fell on the deaf ears of the Babylonian soldiers. God’s role to pay back the hard work of besieging Tyre is emphasized here. The efforts to take Tyre were part of God’s plan and design and would be rewarded, ***“because they wrought for me.”***

Nebuchadnezzar invaded Egypt in 568-567 B.C. -(Jeremiah 46:13). The exact nature of his conquest is not known, but it may have come at a time of internal weakness in Egyptian politics. We can apply the truism, ***“God is no man’s debtor,”*** to even the pagan Babylonians. The theological implications for these verses are troubling in that we serve a God Who directs the events of history, even when they seem to go against the welfare of His people. We serve a sovereign God who does what He wills to accomplish His purposes, which are sometimes above our comprehension. In Romans 8:28, the Apostle Paul helps us grasp this point: ***“And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose”.***

**29:21** After the news that Babylon would continue to conquer, this verse was a word of encouragement for the Hebrew exiles. ***“In that day”*** is a phrase that alerts us to a prophetic fulfillment -(cf. Ezekiel 39:11). ***“Horn”*** represents the strength of a person -(e.g., 1<sup>st</sup> Samuel 2:1; cf. 2<sup>nd</sup> Samuel 22:3) or of a people -(Psalm 89:17) in Old Testament culture. When Jerusalem fell to Babylon, Jeremiah wrote that every horn of Israel had been cut off -(Lamentations 2:3). In another more positive parallel in Psalm 132:17, God says, ***“There will I make the horn of David***

**to bud.”** When Israel’s strength as a nation was renewed, God said He would open Ezekiel’s mouth among them. This cannot refer to the ending of Ezekiel’s divine dumbness -(cf. Ezekiel 3:26f) for two reasons: (1) Ezekiel’s dumbness had already ended in the 12th year of Jehoiachin’s exile -(Ezekiel 33:21-22), and this prophecy came in the 27th year -(Ezekiel 29:17). (2) This prophecy would take place after Israel was restored from captivity. Though the latter is emphasized in chapters 1-32, the former will get much more attention in chapters 33-48 (and certainly in the New Testament).

### **Chapter 30:**

**30:1-26.** This chapter contains the third and fourth of “seven” prophecies concerning Egypt in Ezekiel’s prophecies against the nations. Verses 1-19 have a series of four brief messages of judgment, and verses 20-26 comprise a short wordplay about “arms”.

**30:1.** The revelation formula repeated.

**30:2.** *“Son of man. Thus saith the Lord God”* is the messenger formula, and will be used to divide verses 1-19 into four subsections, each headed by the messenger formula: verses 2-5, 6-9, 10ff, 13-19. The opening words of the first subsection, verses 2-5, mark it as a lament. *“Howl,”* is a common word in prophetic laments announcing the coming of God’s judgment against a land -(e.g., Isaiah 13:6, Babylon; Jeremiah 47:2, Philistia; Amos 8:3, Israel). *“Woe”* occurs in the Hebrew Bible only here in Ezekiel. The use of short phrases expresses the dire cries of afflicted people.

**30:3.** Repeating *“the day”* from the previous verse, vs. 3 compounds it three times and concludes with a reference to *“the time.”* This style was used in chapter 7 for a prophecy against Judah and refers to the time when God allows a nation to fall to its enemies -(Ezekiel 7:7, 12; Joel 3:14; Obadiah 15; Zephaniah 1:14).

**30:4.** *“Sword”* is a metaphor for warfare. Cush refers to the upper Nile region south of Egypt. *“Slain”* and *“to fall”* are frequently paired in battle accounts -(1<sup>st</sup> Chronicles 10:1) and prophecies of coming military disasters -(Jeremiah 51:4; Ezek. 35:8). The KJV’s *“multitudes”* and the NIV/NRSV’s *“wealth”* come from *nāphal*, a verb that means to fall. It is a word that can refer to either the multitude of people -(1<sup>st</sup> Kings 20:13) or riches -(Ezekiel 29:19). *“Foundations,”* may refer to literal buildings such as the Temple -(2<sup>nd</sup> Chronicles 23:5) or figurative lives of people -(Proverbs 10:25). Here, the term may have reference to both Egypt’s buildings and people, which would be destroyed in the future attack by Babylon.

**30:5.** Various neighboring countries who allied themselves with Egypt are listed. Cush is the upper Nile region south of Egypt; Put is modern Libya; Lydia is in Asia Minor; and Chub (NIV “Libya”) is probably a region in Libya. *“All the mingled people”* may refer to Hebrew exiles living in Egypt; they too would come under the Babylonian “sword.”

**30:6.** The messenger formula signals the next unit of verses. Verses 6-9 expand upon the theme in vs. 5 of the fall of Egypt's allies. The verb **"to fall"** in the Hebrew text begins and ends the message of God to Egypt to emphasize its sure demise. The KJV's **"tower of Syene"** is rendered in the NIV as **"Migdol to Aswan,"** indicating the northern to southern extent of Egypt proper. (See map on page 21, part 1).

**30:7.** The four poetic lines involving a pair of words, **"desolate"** and **"cities,"** produce a tight and forceful structure. **"To be desolate,"** is a word found in prophetic descriptions of God's wasting of various countries, and it appears frequently in Leviticus 26, and the Books of Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel (over twenty times) and Daniel.

**30:8.** **"They shall know that I am the Lord"** is called the recognition formula and reveals that even in judgment there are theological lessons to be learned. Fire is one of the common results of war and is linked with Egypt in Jeremiah 43:12f and also later in this chapter (vs. 16).

**30:9.** Mention of **"that day... the day of Egypt"** picks up the theme of verses 2f and is a common wording for doomsday passages -(see Ezekiel 7:7, 10). News of the fall of Egypt could reach Libya ("Cush") by sea. **"For lo, it cometh"** reinforces the veracity of God's words.

**30:10.** The third messenger formula marks the next subsection of chapter 30, verses 10ff. Verses 10 and 12 feature the divine work of God to bring Babylon against Egypt, while vs. 11 focuses on what this invading army would do.

**"Multitude"** is a term which Ezekiel uses to describe the abundance of both Egypt's riches and its numbers of people (here and vs. 15). But in spite of Egypt's human and material resources, Nebuchadnezzar's army would succeed. "Nebuchadnezzar" is mentioned by name four times in Ezekiel (26:7; 29:18f; 30:10). He succeeded his father, Nabonidus, and ruled Babylon from 605-562 B.C. Notice that it is God Who would put an end to Egypt and use human instrumentality to do so.

**30:11.** **"Terrible of the nations"** is found four times in Ezekiel and refers to the Babylonians (28:7; 30:11; 31:12; 32:12). **"Powerful," "violent,"** can refer to God -(e.g., Jeremiah 20:11), but more often to powerful but wicked people -(e.g., Jeremiah 15:21).

**30:12.** The phrase, **"make the rivers dry,"** refers to the delta region of Egypt where the river divides into many different channels to the sea, and it is the most populous and important region of ancient and modern Egypt. The language of drying up the Nile is a metaphorical figure describing the divine work of God against the land. **"I the Lord have spoken"** is a characteristic phrase in Ezekiel, appearing thirteen times, and underlines the certainty of God's intended actions to bring Egypt down in defeat.

**30:13.** The fourth occurrence of the messenger formula introduces the fourth subsection of the opening prophecy. Verses 13-19 are a travelogue of destruction as Ezekiel mentions city after city of Egypt that will be destroyed. Such a narrative passage was employed by other prophets

as well to emphasize the extent of devastation that was to come -(Jeremiah 48:18-25, Moab; Isaiah 10:28-32, Judah; Micah 1:10-15, Judah). Noph is better known to western readers as Memphis, a major city of ancient Egypt.

**30:14.** *“Pathros”* is a reference to southern Egypt. Zoan is in the eastern delta land where the Israelites had lived and worked in the days of Moses. *“No”* is better known to western readers as Thebes -(Nahum 3:8) and served as the capital city of upper or southern Egypt.

**30:15.** Sin, or Pelusium, was a fortress city in the northeast delta region; hence Ezekiel called it *“the strength of Egypt.”* Today, Egypt’s military, or a large portion of it is based in this area, placing its forces in close proximity of the Israeli southern border.

**30:16.** Repetition of names does not indicate sloppy editorial work by unknown scribes but was a part of the style that characterized Ezekiel.

**30:17.** *“Heliopolis”* for *“Aven”* and *“Bubastis”* for *“Pi-Beseth”* reflect western (Greek) historical names for these towns. Both are located north of modern-day Cairo.

**30:18.** Tahpanhes was the northeast city to which the elderly Jeremiah was taken when a group of Hebrew exiles fled in fear of Babylonian reprisals after the death of Gedaliah -(Jeremiah 43:4-7).

**30:19.** The recognition formula concludes the first prophecy in the chapter. It presupposes that the surviving Egyptians would extrapolate from the coming invasion of their land by Babylon that a Higher Power than that of mere humans was at work. God would be glorified one way or another.

**30:20.** Verses 20-26 comprise the fourth of seven prophecies of Ezekiel about the land of Egypt. This prophecy is a *“call to arms,”* a wordplay on the opposite ways in which the Lord would direct the coming conflict between Egypt and Babylon.

The dating of this prophecy, April 29, 587 B.C., is the eighth such dating in the Book, and the event by Babylon came about fifteen months after the siege of Jerusalem had begun. *“The word of the Lord came unto me”* is called the revelation formula and marks new prophecies in the book.

**30:21.** *“Son of man”*. The *“broken arm”* of Pharaoh may refer to the attempt by Egypt to lift the siege of Jerusalem in the summer of 588 B.C. -(Jeremiah 34:21f; 37:11). The Egyptian forces either were defeated or simply retreated before the Babylonians, who temporarily broke their siege of Jerusalem so as to confront the Egyptian threat. The metaphor of a broken arm is apt for a military situation in which the defeated have no ability to hold a sword and fight.



**30:22.** God's words to Pharaoh become almost comic in their allusion to both arms being broken. A visual picture of a soldier with both arms in splints trying to prepare for a battle is tragic comedy. Egypt would be powerless to stop what God had ordered.

**30:23.** The language of dispersing duplicates the actions of God toward his own people. As the Hebrew people went into exile, so the Egyptians would be dispersed -(cf. Ezekiel 29:12).

**30:24-25.** A balanced literary unit with the strengthening of one matched by the weakening of the other: a sword put in one's hands and a groaning put in the other's mouth. ***"They shall know that I am the Lord"*** is the recognition formula. The true God is validated by the fulfillment of events predicted here.

**30:26.** Verse 26 is a recitation of verses 23, 25. The repetition is part of Ezekiel's style, serving to make his point clear and emphatic, rounding out or completing the prophecy.

### **Chapter 31:**

**31:1-18.** We have here the fifth prophecy to Egypt in Ezekiel's oracles against the nations, this chapter has as its motif the fall of a mighty tree. Use of a dominant image throughout a chapter characterizes the writing style of Ezekiel. Just as the sinking of a great merchant ship was the theme and motif of the fall of Tyre described in chapter 27, so here, Ezekiel uses a description of a great tree of Lebanon as a literary allegory for Egypt. In point of fact, verses 3-18 describe the power and might of Assyria (see discussion on vs. 3 below), which is applied to the Pharaoh of Egypt in verses 2, 18. From the ninth century down to the late seventh century B.C., Assyria had been the dominant force in the ancient Near East. In the lifetime of Ezekiel and his Hebrew exiles, Assyria had fallen to the emerging power of Babylon by 609 B.C. Thus, the fall of the once mighty nation of Assyria became the model for the predicted fall of the current might of Egypt. Some scholars have argued that an original literary piece about Assyria was picked up by Ezekiel and reapplied to Egypt. This is unlikely.

The message of Ezekiel 31 is clear enough, regardless of its literary history: human pride that challenges the rule and glory of God will not endure before the retribution of the sovereign Lord. Yes, the great empires had their day in the sun of history, but they all were setting suns. Historians write of the rise and fall of empires. Prophets such as Ezekiel wrote of the one true kingdom that will endure beyond time into eternity.

The structure of chapter 31 can be divided into three sections: verses 1-9 portray the glory of Assyria/Egypt; verses 10-14 describe its fall to earth; verses 15-18 extend that fall to the world of Sheol/grave. The messenger formula, ***"Thus saith the Lord God,"*** marks the beginning of the last two sections. The chapter concludes with another common phrase in the prophets, ***"saith the Lord God."*** This phrase is found 2,856X (7 x 408) in the King James Bible.

**31:1.** The date is June 21, 587 B.C., in western chronology, about a year and a half since the siege of Jerusalem had begun. ***“The word of the Lord came unto me”*** is the revelation formula used by Ezekiel to start a new prophecy.

**31:2.** ***“Son of man”*** - Like the first and sixth prophecies against Egypt, this prophecy is addressed to Pharaoh -(29:2 and 32:2). Especially in Egyptian culture, the king personified the nation as the representative of the gods to the people.

The question raised by God is seemingly flattering, for it presupposes a negative answer, ***“no one.”*** The word ***“greatness”*** comes from a common Hebrew adjective for “great” and provides an opening clue to the direction the chapter will take. The particular form used here (masculine singular) is usually used of God in the Old Testament (e.g., Deuteronomy 3:24; 5:24; 9:26; Psalm 150:2), but can refer to the pride of wicked people -(Isaiah 9:9). In a very close parallel, Isaiah 10:12 applies the word to an Assyrian king, ***“I will punish the fruit of the stout heart of the king of Assyria, and the glory of his high looks.”*** Hence, this word may reveal that Ezekiel did not intend to flatter, but to reveal the sin of self-deifying pride. Although no one on earth could find more powerful kings and kingdoms than those of Egypt and Assyria, there is no comparison to the heavenly King.

**31:3.** Most commentators relate “Assyrian” to “cypress” and argue that the Hebrew text of the Masorete tradition made a mistake of just a couple of letters. This produces an even flow of thought as Pharaoh is then compared to a “cypress, a cedar in Lebanon.” Following the principle that the Masoretic text should be followed unless it makes no sense at all, we will retain the reference to “Assyria.” Retaining the Hebrew reading does complicate the sense of the text by seeing the reference to Assyria being used as an analogy in verses 3-18, which is then applied to Egypt. This double allusion will be addressed by employing a joint designation, “Assyria/Egypt.” The forests of Lebanon were frequent sources for literary allusion -(Judge 9:15; 2<sup>nd</sup> Kings 14:9; Song of Solomon 5:15; Ezekiel 17:3), based on the height, beauty and verdant growth of their trees. The cedars of Lebanon are conifers, reaching heights of 120 feet. Their strong wood was used in Solomon’s temple, royal palaces and furniture. Conifers are soft wood type trees and most keep their needles throughout the year. Conifers are chosen for year-round decorative purposes.

**31:4.** Rainfall in Palestine varies widely but is more abundant in Lebanon’s coastal regions than the southern areas such as the Judean wilderness and the Negeb. The description here of a well-watered tree is similar to that of the metaphorical tree in Psalm 1:3.

**31:5.** Using the imagery of the cedars of Lebanon, the picture given is that of a “king” of the trees towering over others in height and extent.

**31:6.** The description of birds and animals living in or under this great cedar tree is like the messianic tree in Ezekiel 17:22ff and the tree in Nebuchadnezzar’s dream of Daniel 4:10ff (cf. Matt. 13:31f). The mention of ***“all great nations”*** living in its shade refers to the extent of the Assyrian Empire, whose past glory is being used to reflect upon the current glory of the

Egyptian power. The Assyrians dominated many countries in the ancient Near East for centuries.

**31:7.** The upward majesty of this cedar tree is due to the downward reach of its roots tapped into a sufficient supply of water. For Americans, the towering heights of the Pacific coastal redwoods provide a cultural parallel to this mighty cedar of Lebanon. As a person walks under such trees, he feels insignificant and overwhelmed by God's natural wonders.

**31:8.** Remembering that this is an allegory, we should not take the comparison too literally in seeking knowledge about the Garden of Eden -(Genesis 2-3). Ezekiel was making a rhetorical point about the power and extent of the Assyrian/Egyptian empires, which covered many nations in their grasp. The point of this comparison is the creeping of pride into the heart of such mighty nations. They felt superior to all who preceded them and they even felt superior to God himself -(cf. 28:2; 29:3).

**31:9.** The decisive statement is made, ***"I have made him fair."*** It was God's sovereign rule of history that enabled such empires as Egypt and Assyria to rise to their glory. The implication is that such powers begin to think that their might was attained by their own abilities apart from divine enablement. The concept of "Eden... in the garden of God" is embedded deeply within biblical writings. From the perfect setting for Adam and Eve, the place became a standard of beauty and locale for human living -(cf. Genesis 13:10; Isaiah 51:3; Revelation 22:1-5). Ezekiel returns to this motif when he pictures a restored people of God set in their restored land -(Ezekiel 36:35).

**31:10.** The opening messenger formula (see the introduction to this chapter) marks the next subsection of this chapter. ***"Therefore"*** and ***"because"*** signal the transition from mere description to indictment. While the pride of the great tree has already been hinted at, now it is clearly stated. The word association, ***"heart"*** and ***"lifted up,"*** was used by Moses to warn Israel in its future blessings -(Deuteronomy 8:14) and its future king -(Deuteronomy 17:20), by Isaiah to describe the haughty "king of Babylon" -(Isaiah 14:13f) and by Daniel for a future proud king of Egypt -(Daniel 11:12). The danger of pride is great for any successful ruler of any time or place.

**31:11.** The divine judgment began with this great but proud tree being handed over to "the mighty one of the heathen". The term, ***"mighty one,"*** is the same Hebrew spelling as ***"ram,"*** and may or may not derive from the animal of that name. The root letters being found with this meaning of human rulers in Exodus 15:15; 2<sup>nd</sup> Kings 24:15; Ezekiel 17:10; 32:21; Ezekiel is probably referring to the king of Assyria being defeated by Nabonidus or to the king of Egypt being defeated by Babylon's next ruler, Nebuchadnezzar.

**31:12.** The allegory of a tree continues with actions associated with the felling of a great cedar of Lebanon. ***"The terrible of the nations"*** may imply a collective singular noun such as ***"Babylon,"*** but the NRSV's ***"foreigners"*** makes it clear that a multitude/host of people is intended. But unlike the normal role of the lumberjack to trim and utilize the wood of a tree,

here the tree with its attached branches is left to rot. We are left with a picture of abandoned destruction.

**31:13.** More description of neglect is depicted as the fallen tree becomes a nesting place for birds and a safe haven for small wild animals.

**31:14.** This verse reads like a *“moral of the story”* in which God uses the fall of Assyria/Egypt as a lesson for other nations. Sad to say, few mighty nations have paid much attention to this lesson. *“Pride goes before a fall”* applies to nations no less than to individuals, as subsequent human history recounts one fall after another of great nations.

**31:15.** The opening words of the messenger formula indicate the last subdivision of chapter 31. Verses 16ff continue the tree motif one more step: its descent to the afterworld of Sheol, the literal Hebrew translation for the *“grave,”* and the language of the verse is that of people mourning for the dead.

**31:16.** At the fall of Assyria/Egypt, other nations respond in a reflexive type reaction of horror. The word for “shake” is often found in Old Testament poetic texts of the earth trembling before the coming of the Lord in power -(Judges 5:4; Psalm 18:7). In a close parallel in Isaiah 14:16, the other lands are said to wonder why they had once trembled at the power of the *“king of Babylon.”* Besides the reaction to Assyria/Egypt’s fall by the still-existing nations, vs. 16 mentions the reaction by the past “trees” of former nations. They were “comforted” or “consoled,” that such a great power had also fallen -(cf. use of the word “comfort” in 32:31).

**31:17.** The fall of the big tree had brought down its smaller neighbors and allies (see vs. 12).

**31:18.** The Garden of Eden was probably located within the Mesopotamian region, and Assyria occupied the northern half of Mesopotamia. Perhaps that is why there are several references of comparison to the *“garden of God”* and *“Eden”* in this chapter. As noted in the discussion of vs. 3, this chapter’s description of a mighty cedar may have been for Assyria, but it was also applied to Egypt simultaneously. The closing verse makes this point clear. While Assyria had been once a mighty power, so too, Egypt would become a former great power.

## **Chapter 32:**

**32:1-32.** Containing the last two of “seven” prophecies against Egypt in chapters 29-32, this chapter continues the theme of the worldwide reaction to Egypt’s fall predicted in this part of Ezekiel. Verses 1-16 comprise a global chant of what is to befall a once mighty and powerful country. Verses 17-32 expand the idea of the descent of Egypt into the afterlife that 31:15-18 portrays.

**32:1.** The modern dating for this prophecy is March 3, 585 B.C. and is the tenth date in the Book of Ezekiel. *“The word of the Lord came unto me”* is the revelation formula used by the prophet to mark a new prophecy in his writings.

**32:2. “Son of man”** The word *“lamentation,”* is used here and at the end of this prophecy in vs. 16. Laments were funeral songs or orations grieving the death of someone. Ezekiel called a number of his prophecies *“laments”* that were directed to Judah’s kings -(e.g., 19:1, 14) and to Tyre and its king -(e.g., 26:17; 27:2; 28:12). The opening call of God to Ezekiel included his visionary eating of a scroll that included laments -(2:10) such as we find here. Two metaphors are used to describe Egypt’s king. Calling him a *“lion”* is the way in which Ezekiel referred to Judah’s own kings -(19:1-9). A lion is a common metaphor for royal authority; even the New Testament calls Jesus Christ the *“Lion of Judah”* -(Revelation 5:5). But it is the second metaphor, that of a river monster, that Ezekiel chose to expand upon in this chapter. The exact identity of this aquatic beast is not specified, but speculation runs from the Nile River crocodile to a mythical sea dragon -(Job 41:1). The emphasis of this creature is its powerful control and sovereignty over Egypt’s waterways (see comments on 29:3).

**32:3.** There are two messenger formulas *“Thus saith the Lord God”*; in verses 1-16, here and in v. 11. Both are used to sharpen the focus on God’s judgment upon the Pharaoh of Egypt. Verses 3-10 contain a series of divine intentions, *“I will”* declarations, which prove the superiority of the Lord against the pseudo-power of the Egyptian king. The focus of the verse is upon the action of the human armies, which will invade and conquer Egypt and its proud Pharaoh. All his aquatic bravado of vs. 2 is shown to be powerless before the net which captures and drags him out of the water.

**32:4.** Like an unwanted catch in a fisherman’s net, the *“body”* of this water creature is heaved upon land, dead or near death, becoming the carrion of scavenging creatures.

**32:5-6.** The bloated carcass and its blood are pictured as covering the entire land. Rather than being a fountain of life for the people, the Pharaoh’s body becomes a stench and source of fouling flesh.

**32:7-8.** From the earthly consequences of Egypt’s fall, Ezekiel moves to celestial results. God promises to effect apocalyptic conditions of darkness -(cf. Isaiah 13:10 for similar effects on the day of the fall of the Babylonian Empire, or the effects of the fourth trumpet in Revelation 8:12). Though this is poetic hyperbole, the message is that Egypt’s fall would so stun the world of nations that it would be equivalent to a major catastrophe in the heavens.

**32:9-10.** From the polluting of the land of Egypt in verses 5f and the darkening of the celestial lights in verses 7f, verses 9f return to the reaction of the world of people who would observe the fall of Egypt—a reaction of horror, troubling and trembling. Ezekiel used similar language at the fall of Tyre -(Ezekiel 26:15f).

**32:11. “Thus saith the Lord God”** (see vs. 3 above) renews God’s personal vendetta against the Egyptian Pharaoh. The human instrumentality of *“the sword of the king”* of vs. 10 is revealed here, Nebuchadnezzar -(29:19; 30:10).

**32:12.** *“The terrible of the nations”* (see comments on 31:12). Reference to *“pomp of Egypt”* (NIV, *“pride”*; Hebrew, describes a repeated offense against God, not only by Egypt (30:6, 18) but also Moab -(Isaiah 16:6), Sodom -(Ezekiel 16:49) and Judah itself -(Jeremiah 13:9).

**32:13.** A specific way in which Egypt would be humbled was that of its agricultural base. Here it is the destruction of cattle. No divine causation is mentioned, whether war or disease.

**32:14.** As in 29:13-16, God announces a comeback for the people of Egypt. The pacification of its rivers signals a time of peace and recovery.

**32:15.** Like so many of his prophecies, Ezekiel closes with the recognition formula (see 5:13). Judgment against pride that teaches something about the folly of human accomplishment that does not acknowledge the sovereignty of God.

**32:16.** The prophecy ends the way it began with a reference that the intervening verses were a lament (see vs. 2). The repeated use of both noun, *“lamentation,”* and verb, *“to lament,”* intensifies the somber tone of the defeat of the once great lion and water monster, Egypt.

**32:17.** This verse contains one of two dated prophecies in which only the day and year are given (see also 26:1), making it sometime between April 13, 586 and April 1, 585 B.C.. *“The word of the Lord came unto me”* is the revelation formula (see comments on 1:3) that Ezekiel used as a divider between his prophecies.

Verses 17-32 provide a sort of “dishonor” roll of fallen nations to which Egypt now is added. All take consolation in Egypt joining their ranks.

**32:18.** *“Son of man”* (see comments on 2:1). The verb, *“to wail,”* is not the common one in the Old Testament for lamenting (see 32:2, 16). It occurs only three times -(1<sup>st</sup> Samuel 7:2; Ezekiel 32:18; Micah 2:4) but bears the same meaning for the outward display of cries and mourning exhibited at funerals. Reference to the *“nether parts of the earth... pit”* are key words for this prophecy and occur in vv. 18, 23ff, 29f. They refer to death, the grave, the afterlife. The psalmist -(Psalms. 28:1; 30:3; 40:2; 88:4, 6; 143:7) and the prophets -(Isaiah 14:15, 19; 38:18) regarded the “pit,” as the world of the dead where the living could no longer praise God or do his will.

**32:19.** Another repeated word in this prophecy is *“uncircumcised,”* occurring ten times in vv. 19-32. It takes on more than a reference to a cultural practice, but acquires the connotation of people and nations who are disreputable and lowly of social station and place. Contemporary Americans use the term “scum” in such a derisive manner. The question in this verse is meant to cause introspection and a realistic self-assessment. Egypt’s pride is now stripped away. God commands it to join the dead nations of the past.

**32:20.** The *“sword”* stands for God’s judgment by warfare and occurs frequently in Ezekiel - (e.g., 5:2) and the prophets -(e.g., Isaiah 1:20; Jeremiah 14:12). A drawn sword is one out of its sheath and ready for battle -(Ezekiel 21:3).

**32:21.** The KJV’s *“hell”* should not be taken in a New Testament sense, but the NIV’s *“grave”* gives us the preferred connotations. We are dealing with a literary portrait of the fall of nations in human history. Those already having preceded Egypt now welcome another member to the dust bin of history.

**32:22-23.** The Neo-Assyrian Empire, once the terror of the ancient Near East, was deposed by the current superpower, the Babylonians, by 612 B.C. Their long domination from the ninth to the seventh centuries B.C. had ended during Ezekiel’s lifetime.

**32:24-25.** Elam is a land northeast of Babylon that also received a prophetic judgment by Jeremiah -(Jeremiah 49:34-39). Notice the similar wording of each subsequent “occupant” of Sheol. It is as if Ezekiel used a template and simply changed the name of the nation addressed. Though the style may not please our literary taste, it makes an effective point that it was the Lord Who was in charge of the nations, even those great powers that once scourged the earth.

**32:26-27.** Meshech and Tubal are localities in eastern Asia Minor and are mentioned in the prophecies of Ezekiel 38-39 concerning Gog and Magog -(38:2f; 39:1). They were trading partners with Tyre -(27:13), and Genesis 10:2 and 1<sup>st</sup> Chronicles 1:5 list them as descendants of Noah’s son, Japheth.

**32:28.** The NIV’s reference to “Pharaoh,” though not a part of the Hebrew text, is probably correct in assuming that the direct address, “you,” is referring back to the Egyptians and their king (see “you” in vs. 19). The idea of a country being *“broken”* is also used of Tyre -(26:2) as well as of Egypt -(30:8).

**32:29.** Edom, the descendants of Esau living south of the Dead Sea, was already given a direct word of judgment from God in Ezekiel 25:12ff and is given the same in 35:1-15. Its *“might,”* or power, would not prevail against its enemies, and it would also join the ranks in Sheol with the other fallen nations.

**32:30.** Sidon stands for the line of Phoenician city-states that stretched north of Israel along the Mediterranean coast. Ezekiel 28:20-26 is a whole prophecy in the oracles against the nations devoted to the fall of Sidon.

**32:31-32.** The last nation in Ezekiel’s verbal “template” of fallen nations is Egypt. In the imagery of Pharaoh’s descent with his army into Sheol, they are consoled at not being alone. Other great nations, listed already in this prophecy, had preceded them.

The concluding words emphasize the divine guarantee that the prophecy would happen, *“saith the Lord God.”*

## Some final observations on Ezekiel 25-32. Several questions come to mind.

- 1) One is, "Where is Babylon?" Its omission in the list of nations given God's warning seems unforgivable. Isaiah had prophesied the fall of Babylon back in the eighth century B.C. - (Isaiah 13-14). Even Ezekiel's contemporary prophet, Jeremiah, spent two chapters on Babylon -(Jeremiah 50-51). We do not have a definite answer, but it seems plausible that Ezekiel's location in the land of Babylon would have made it difficult for the Hebrew exiles to discuss the nature and likelihood of their overlord's demise. For that reason, some have suggested that "Tyre" may be a cryptic code for Babylon, based on how Tyre is described (cf. the emphasis of Babylon as a land of merchants in 16:29; 17:4; 27:12-23). That probably is unlikely. Daniel, though a fellow Hebrew in exile at the court of Babylon, did speak about the eventual fall of the Babylonians (see the succession of nations in Dan. 2, 7), but he also had the personal protection of Nebuchadnezzar.
- 2) A second question is, "What do these chapters mean for us?"
  - First, these chapters teach us that **God does hold all nations accountable to a moral standard** that is common to all people. There is enough general revelation of right and wrong to hold all kings and authorities accountable.
  - Second, God resists the state that holds itself up as the final and exclusive authority. Whether it be the king of Tyre, the Pharaoh of Egypt or the president of a modern state such as the United States, God will judge any who become proud and deceived by their success.
  - Third, these chapters help remind us that God is involved in the affairs of nations, whether Christian, pagan or atheistic. The people of God are the "**apple of his eye,**" but He does not overlook what is going on in the life of every land.
- 3) Why are Israel's immediate neighbors not listed in Ezekiel's prophecy? Indeed, all of Israel's neighbors are enemies who continually top the headlines with threats to "wipe Israel off the map," or to "throw the Jews into the sea." Some prophecy teachers like Joel Rosenberg, lump Israel's neighbors in with "the many people" in Ezekiel 38:6. The context seems to speak of the vastness of the army, not of other countries. God thinks that Israel's neighbors are very important; He specifically mentions Israel's neighbors by name over and over throughout Scripture. Perhaps the Lord intentionally left these countries out of this passage because they will not join the Gog and Magog confederacy. Sometimes what isn't in Scripture is just as important as what is there. We should take care not to assume anything.

Psalm 83 and several unfulfilled prophecies in the Old Testament may explain what will happen to Israel's immediate neighbors that will keep them from joining the Gog and Magog coalition. When Israel defeats her neighbors the world will go into an uproar. It seems fitting to me that the time would be ripe for the antichrist to come on the scene at that time and confirm the "**covenant with death**" with Israel that will make them feel safe. It would not surprise me if in celebration, Israel goes out and tears down all the walls they



have built up for security after they defeat their neighbors, like the tearing down of the Berlin wall when Germany was re-united. Such an event would truly make Israel a country with "un-walled" villages -(Ezekiel 38:11) that believes they are finally living in "peace and safety." However, Israel will find out that only God can give them true "peace and safety" after He defends them in the "Gog and Magog War." My analysis and study suggests to me Egypt's demise and destruction will be after the Ezekiel 38/39 scenario occurs, but after the mid-point of Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> Week.

Egypt is eerily silent in the famous Gog/Magog prophecy of Ezekiel 38/39. Other Muslim lands (most famously Iran) will converge on Israel, but Egypt is not mentioned at all. A nation run by radicals and has attacked Israel four times in the past 70 years will sit idly by? Yes.

Why would God omit one of Israel's oldest enemies from this prophecy? The enemies who converge on Israel during this famous invasion are so badly mauled that they cease to function as nations. But as Isaiah and Daniel indicate, God has bigger plans for the Egyptian people.

Surprisingly Egypt's Christian-persecuting leaders will one day become Christians. With brutal persecution of Christians, suppression of women's rights, and weekly American flag burnings, this biblical prediction seems far-fetched. Keep in mind the Bible's predictions have always fulfilled in a literal fashion. This miraculous conversion will not take place until the Millennial Kingdom. Yet before Egypt converts this ancient nation must undergo severe trials.

***"I will stir up Egyptian against Egyptian—brother will fight against brother, neighbor against neighbor, city against city, kingdom against kingdom. The Egyptians will lose heart, and I will bring their plans to nothing; they will consult the idols and the spirits of the dead, the mediums and the spiritists. I will hand the Egyptians over to the power of a cruel master, and a fierce king will rule over them,"*** declares the Lord, the Lord Almighty -(Isaiah 19:2-4).

Found amidst other end-times prophecies in Isaiah, chapter 19 details Egypt's future. First, there is to be civil war. In the future, some Egyptians may tire of Egypt's oppressive Muslim Brotherhood, leading to war. Isaiah does not specify why Egypt goes to war with itself, but after watching their "Arab Spring" it should not be surprising. Perhaps some Egyptians will grow weary of having a curfew, or maybe the women of Egypt will storm the palace gates demanding the right to wear jeans again.

A second and more chilling prophecy lies in the ***"cruel master and fierce king"*** that will rule over them. This future dictator will be the antichrist. Daniel records that the antichrist will invade not only Egypt, but the entire Middle East during the Tribulation. ***"He will invade many countries and sweep through them like a flood. He will also invade the Beautiful Land. Many countries will fall, but Edom, Moab and the leaders of Ammon will be delivered from his hand. He will extend his power over many countries; Egypt will not escape"*** -(Daniel 11:40b-42). It is Egypt (the king of the South in Daniel) who rise up against the antichrist during the Tribulation. The rebellion is met with swift destruction as the antichrist usurps control over Egypt.

Additionally, Isaiah 19 prophesies that Egypt will undergo serious environmental disasters. Yet in the end, Egypt will become a land of believers again.

***"The Lord will strike Egypt with a plague; he will strike them and heal them. They will turn to the Lord, and he will respond to their pleas and heal them. In that day there will be a highway from Egypt to Assyria. The Assyrians will go to Egypt and the Egyptians to Assyria. The Egyptians and Assyrians will worship together. In that day Israel will be the third, along with Egypt and Assyria, a blessing on the earth. The Lord Almighty will bless them, saying, "Blessed be Egypt my people, Assyria my handiwork, and Israel my inheritance" (Isaiah 19:22-25).***

After the horror of the Tribulation, Egypt will enter into a spiritual/economic alliance with Israel and Assyria during the Millennium. As difficult as it is to believe, Egypt and Israel will become allies one day. Egypt is a far cry from the Millennium. Despite Egyptian rage towards Christians and Jews today, the people of the Nile will eventually mend the error of their ways and embrace Jesus Christ. Before Egypt is to be called **"my people"** by God in the Millennium, they have a long hard road ahead of them.

The key Middle Eastern prophecy of Daniel 11 clearly states that **"the land of Egypt shall not escape"** the military invasion by the king of the North (verse 42), launched in retaliation to provocation by the leader of an end-time Muslim alliance known as the king of the South (verse 40). Egypt is the King of the South through geography. We cannot predict the exact unfolding of this scenario, but the Bible prophecy explicitly says that Egypt will push against the Assyrians (Iran, or Syria, or Turkey, or all three). We can expect to see Egypt quickly become a far more radical-Sunni-Islamist-controlled state in the near future. Watch for a power struggle between the Sunni controlled Egyptian military establishment and the Shia-controlled Iranian Revolutionary Guard and/or its Navy.

According to the prophecies, Egypt will PUSH against (Iran? Syria?) and Iran/Syria (possibly backed by Russia and/or China) will defeat them, taking control of the Egyptian forces. The worst of all consequences will be the ultimate hazard for the State of Israel. With the loss of Egypt as a peace-partner, Jordan is likely to suffer the same fate. Israel is likely to find itself entirely surrounded by hostile enemy forces in the near future.

These are the days when the Bible is its own best commentary. Imagine Isaiah the prophet standing on the streets of Cairo today speaking in front of a mainstream news camera declaring: ***"The burden against Egypt. Behold, the LORD rides on a swift cloud, And will come into Egypt; The idols of Egypt will totter at His presence, And the heart of Egypt will melt in its midst. "I will set Egyptians against Egyptians; Everyone will fight against his brother, And everyone against his neighbor, City against city, kingdom against kingdom. The spirit of Egypt will fail in its midst; I will destroy their counsel, And they will consult the idols and the charmers, The mediums and the sorcerers. And the Egyptians I will give Into the hand of a cruel master, And a fierce king will rule over them,"*** Says the Lord, the LORD of hosts. -(Isaiah 19:1-4).

Like a swift moving cloud, Isaiah predicts the rapid deterioration of events in Egypt. Civil unrest causes Egyptians to fight against each other. This fighting spreads from household to household and grows into a kingdom war. Probably quoting Isaiah 19:2, Christ warned kingdoms would rise against each other in Matthew 24:7. Unlike nation coming against nation, which alludes to world wars, ***“kingdom against kingdom”*** refers to regional conflicts. Christ taught these end days prophecies would come upon the world like birth pains. Like a woman about to deliver her newborn, these events are foretold to come with increased frequency and intensity each building upon the other.

Rumors of regional kingdom wars presently abound in the Middle East. Egypt and Saudi Arabia reportedly conducted joint military exercises back in 2010 preparing for a possible confrontation with Iran. Iran represents the Persian kingdom and Egypt and Saudi Arabia the Arab kingdom. Additionally, the apocalyptically minded president Ahmadinejad of Iran has threatened on several occasions to wipe Israel, representing the Jewish kingdom, off of the map. Psalm 83 predicts the Arab kingdom will someday rise against the Jewish kingdom to banish the name of Israel forever. Both Egypt and Saudi Arabia along with eight other Arab populations join the Arab kingdom in this pending end time prophetic war.

Isaiah’s prognosis for Egypt worsens as you read the rest of his chapter nineteen. Isaiah 19:5-12 tells us unprecedented religious and economic strife plagues the nation according to the purposes of the Lord. Apparently, this disastrous condition befalls Egypt because of its future involvement in Psalm 83 since we read in Isaiah 19:16-18 that Israel will take over five cities in Egypt and cause Hebrew to be the spoken language inside their city limits. One of these cities will be called ***“the City of Destruction,”*** implying the I.D.F. destroys this city.

In that day Egypt will be like women, and will be afraid and fear because of the waving of the hand of the Lord of hosts, which He waves over it. And the land of Judah will be a terror to Egypt; everyone who makes mention of it will be afraid in himself, because of the counsel of the Lord of hosts which He has determined against it. In that day five cities in the land of Egypt will speak the language of Canaan and swear by the Lord of hosts; one will be called the City of Destruction. (Isaiah 19:16-18)

Will the present protests inside Egypt metastasize into the fulfillment of Isaiah 19? If so will the coming cruel leader be the one who leads Egypt into the Psalm 83:6-8 confederacy? All of this is unknown but entirely possible. One thing is for certain; the Middle East appears to be on the verge of going apocalyptic in grand fashion.

But before Pharaoh’s Revenge we are watching the alignment of nations that will result in five-sixths of Russian military forces being destroyed according to the prophet Ezekiel. Most of the major cities of Europe and the West will be eliminated. The whole of the mid-east will be devastated.

Believers in the Lord Jesus Christ will be raptured out -(1<sup>st</sup> Thessalonians 4;16-18) and,

therefore, escape the tribulation and the battle of Armageddon. Praise the Lord! These are days of great opportunity to witness. Soon, our opportunities will be over, when we are with the Lord Jesus Christ. Let's use each day the Lord gives to us to the fullest!

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