

EZEKIEL

Chapter 29

Prophecy Against Egypt

In the tenth year, in the tenth month, on the twelfth day of the month, the word of the LORD came to me: 2 “Son of man, set your face against Pharaoh king of Egypt, and prophesy against him and against all Egypt; 3 speak, and say, Thus says the Lord GOD: “Behold, I am against you, Pharaoh king of Egypt, the great dragon that lies in the midst of his streams, that says, ‘My Nile is my own; I made it for myself.’ 4 I will put hooks in your jaws, and make the fish of your streams stick to your scales; and I will draw you up out of the midst of your streams, with all the fish of your streams that stick to your scales. 5 And I will cast you out into the wilderness, you and all the fish of your streams; you shall fall on the open field, and not be brought together or gathered. To the beasts of the earth and to the birds of the heavens I give you as food. 6 Then all the inhabitants of Egypt shall know that I am the LORD. “Because you have been a staff of reed to the house of Israel, 7 when they grasped you with the hand, you broke and tore all their shoulders; and when they leaned on you, you broke and made all their loins to shake 8 Therefore thus says the Lord GOD: Behold, I will bring a sword upon you, and will cut off from you man and beast, 9 and the land of Egypt shall be a desolation and a waste. Then they will know that I am the LORD. “Because you said, ‘The Nile is mine, and I made it,’ 10 therefore, behold, I am against you and against your streams, and I will make the land of Egypt an utter waste and desolation, from Migdol to Syene, as far as the border of Cush. 11 No foot of man shall pass through it, and no foot of beast shall pass through it; it shall be uninhabited forty years. 12 And I will make the land of Egypt a desolation in the midst of desolated countries, and her cities shall be a desolation forty years among cities that are laid waste. I will scatter the Egyptians among the nations, and disperse them through the countries. 13 “For thus says the Lord GOD: At the end of forty years I will gather the Egyptians from the peoples among whom they were scattered, 14 and I will restore the fortunes of Egypt and bring them back to the land of Pathros, the land of their origin, and there they shall be a lowly kingdom. 15 It shall be the most lowly of the kingdoms, and never again exalt itself above the nations. And I will make them so small that they will never again rule over the nations. 16 And it shall never again be the reliance of the house of Israel, recalling their iniquity, when they turn to them for aid. Then they will know that I am the Lord GOD.” 17 In the twenty-seventh year, in the first month, on the first day of the month, the word of the LORD came to me: 18 “Son of man, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon made his army labor hard against Tyre. Every head was made bald, and every shoulder was rubbed bare, yet neither he nor his army got anything from Tyre to pay for the labor that he had performed against her. 19 Therefore thus says the Lord GOD: Behold, I will give the land of Egypt to Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon; and he shall carry off its wealth and despoil it and plunder it; and it shall be the wages for his army. 20 I have given him the land of Egypt as his payment for which he labored, because they worked for me, declares the Lord GOD. 21 “On that day I will cause a horn to spring up for the house of Israel, and I will open your lips among them. Then they will know that I am the LORD.”

Chs 29–32 The seventh nation addressed is Egypt (see note, chs 25–32). Seven times, the word of the Lord came to Ezekiel to announce the coming downfall of the proud land of the pharaohs (29:1, 17; 30:1, 20; 31:1; 32:1, 17). (TLSB)

From Genesis to Revelation, the number seven plays a pivotal role in Scripture in symbolizing completeness, as also in Ezekiel’s oracles against Egypt (chapters 29–32). Egypt is the seventh and last of the countries to be addressed in Ezekiel’s oracles against the nations (Ezekiel 25–32), and seven separate

oracles are addressed against it. These seven can again be divided into two segments that somewhat parallel each other, 29:1–31:18 and 32:1–32. Each segment describes Egypt’s destruction by the Babylonians, concluding with the picture of Pharaoh descending into Sheol. (The “seven days” in Ezek 3:15–16, as well as the seven angels in 9:2, also connote completeness.) (CC)

29:1 *tenth year ... tenth month ... twelfth day.* † Jan. 7, 587 B.C.; the sixth date in Ezekiel (see 1:2; 8:1; 20:1; 24:1; 26:1). This is the first of seven oracles against Egypt, all of which are dated, except one (30:1). (CSB)

The word of the Lord recorded in the opening verses of ch 29 came to Ezekiel after the siege of Jerusalem had begun (cf 24:1). No concentration of human might, whether specifically mentioned or not, is able to obstruct God’s plan of salvation. (TLSB)

29:2 *set your face.* In all of Ezekiel’s oracles against Egypt, the message is almost simultaneously against the pharaoh, the land over which he rules, and the people inhabiting it. Even when one of the three is singled out, the other two are implicated. Hence, the pronouns and predicates vary freely in number and gender, although the variation is less obvious in English than in the more inflected Hebrew language. (CC)

Pharaoh. Hophra, 589–570 B.C. (see Jer 44:30). (CSB)

An embodiment of the nation. Half of chs 25–32 is devoted to a sevenfold prophecy against Egypt. Unlike the six other nations, Egypt had achieved the status of a world empire and could be considered a formidable obstruction to God’s government. As Ezekiel wrote his denunciations, Pharaoh was challenging Babylonian supremacy in the ancient world. The armies from the Nile would not be able to prevent Nebuchadnezzar from doing the task God assigned to him—the capture of Jerusalem and the chastening of the chosen people. (TLSB)

29:3 *I am against you.* The rather general challenge formula “I am against you” links this oracle with the preceding ones against Tyre and Sidon (26:3; 28:22). (CC)

great dragon. Or “crocodile”; pictured as being in the Nile. (CSB)

Likely a crocodile. Because God created the great sea creatures (Gn 1:21), they cannot begin to dispute His control of them, for He can dispose of them as readily as He called them into being (Ps 74:13–14; 148:7). Opposition to God is at times represented by a dragon, identified as Rahab or Leviathan. (TLSB)

your streams. Nile delta and canals (cf. Isa 7:18; 19:6; 37:25). (CSB)

29:4 *hooks.* Trapped along with the monster who rules them. (TLSB)

fish of your streams. Egypt’s conquered territories or mercenaries. (CSB)

Satellite nations dependent on Egypt. (TLSB)

29:5 So unimportant is this pompous Pharaoh that he not only will not be given a grand state burial, but his carcass and that of his people will be abandoned to the elements or left to be eaten by animals (a common curse or threat in ancient literature). The metaphorical language here anticipates historical prophecies, first the scattering of the Egyptian populace in 29:12 and then in 29:13 their gathering again in their homeland. (CC)

29:6–12 Egypt's overthrow will be as complete as if its fertile land along the Nile had become a desolation and a waste. (TLSB)

29:6 *a staff of reed*. A comparison made earlier (see Isa 36:6). Hophra briefly but unsuccessfully diverted the Babylonians from laying siege to Jerusalem (see Jer 37:1–10). (CSB)

Zedekiah found out that to rely on Egypt for help was as foolish as leaning one's weight on one of the many stalks or reeds growing on the banks of the Nile (cf Jer 37:6–7). (TLSB)

29:8 *sword*. Nebuchadnezzar's. For the entire expression, which is not found in other prophetic books, see 6:3; 11:8; 14:17; 33:2; see also Lev 26:25. (CSB)

29:9 *a desolation and a waste*. Wrecked as if by new plagues (cf Ex 7–11). (TLSB)

29:10 *Migdol*. Location unknown; probably in northern Egypt (see Jer 44:1; 46:14). (CSB)

The entire north-to-south length of the land of Egypt, from the northernmost area in the delta to the far south (modern Aswan). (TLSB)

29:11 *forty years*. Sometimes used to signify a long and difficult period (cf. 4:6). (CSB)

Symbolic number to indicate the full duration of the imposed punishment. (TLSB)

The land will be completely devoid of life for a generation. The threefold repetition of the number in 29:11–13 emphasizes it. (CC)

29:12 *scatter ... disperse*. Egypt's surrender to foreign domination would be as complete as when Israel was dragged into exile. (TLSB)

29:13–16 Egypt's revival described in terms of Israel's return after the exile from where they were scattered (28:25). However, God will make the Egyptians a minor power. (TLSB)

29:14 *Pathros*. Situated in Upper (southern) Egypt, where the pharaohs once held sway from the ancient capital of Thebes. (TLSB)

29:15 *the most lowly of the kingdoms*. In his role as God's rod of punishment on Israel, the Babylonian king would bring divine judgment on the land of the pharaohs and humble it. Prostrate and decadent, it would not be able to interfere with Israel after the return from exile, when the descendants of Abraham would once again serve as the bearers of promises to all mankind. (TLSB)

29:16 *know that I am the Lord GOD*. Expression implies promised mercy for Israel and Egypt. Cf Is 19:16–25. (TLSB)

29:17 The second oracle against Egypt. (CSB)

twenty-seventh year ... first month ... first day. Apr. 26, 571 B.C.; the seventh date in Ezekiel (see v. 1; 1:2; 8:1; 20:1; 24:1; 26:1) and the latest date given in the book. Since the remaining dated oracles are in more or less chronological order, the date is mentioned here probably because of the subject matter (Egypt). (CSB)

571 BC, c 15 years after the fall of Jerusalem. (TLSB)

29:18 *made his army labor hardn.* Nebuchadnezzar besieged Tyre for 15 years, from 586 to 571 B.C. (see 26:7–14). (CSB)

Egypt's humiliation would begin when Nebuchadnezzar would plunder it. According to a fragment of a Babylonian chronicle, he invaded Egypt in 567 BC (see note, Jer 43:11). When he did so, he worked for God, who did not want Egypt to interfere with Israel's restoration. (TLSB)

every head was made bald. Probably from the leather helmets. (CSB)

Reference to mourning practices and the exertions of the besieging army, which wore itself out. (TLSB)

anything from Tyre. No doubt the Tyrians removed their treasures to the offshore island, which Nebuchadnezzar could not conquer. (TLSB)

29:19 *I will give the land.* God's sovereignty over the nations is again proclaimed. (CSB)

Egypt ... shall be the wages for his army. The Babylonians plunder Egypt to compensate for their fruitless efforts at Tyre. (TLSB)

29:21 *make a horn to spring up grow.*† Revive the strength of. (CSB)

Frequent symbol of strength and kingship (cf Ps 89:17, 24; Jer 48:25). When Christ was born, God "raised up a horn of salvation ... in the house of His servant David" (Lk 1:69; cf Ps 132:17). (TLSB)

open your lips. Ezekiel's muteness (3:26; 24:27) would be removed, and this word anticipates that of 33:22. (CSB)

After the fall of Jerusalem, Ezekiel would renew his prophesying. In chs 33–48, he received special eloquence to proclaim redemption through the coming deliverer. (TLSB)

Ch 29 At God's command, Egypt never again rises to its former greatness, for it shall "never again be the reliance of the house of Israel" (v 16). The efforts of the world are finally brought to naught. The future belongs to the Lord, who promises Israel a deliverer who will bring salvation also to the nations. • Lord, we humbly thank You for protecting us and providing us with a Savior, Jesus Christ. Grant godly leaders among the nations and open our lips to proclaim Your salvation for all. Amen. (TLSB)