

EZEKIEL

Chapter 19

A Lament for the Princes of Israel

And you, take up a lamentation for the princes of Israel, 2 and say: What was your mother? A lioness! Among lions she crouched; in the midst of young lions she reared her cubs. 3 And she brought up one of her cubs; he became a young lion, and he learned to catch prey; he devoured men. 4 The nations heard about him; he was caught in their pit, and they brought him with hooks to the land of Egypt. 5 When she saw that she waited in vain, that her hope was lost, she took another of her cubs and made him a young lion. 6 He prowled among the lions; he became a young lion, and he learned to catch prey; he devoured men, 7 and seized their widows. He laid waste their cities, and the land was appalled and all who were in it at the sound of his roaring. 8 Then the nations set against him from provinces on every side; they spread their net over him; he was taken in their pit. 9 With hooks they put him in a cage and brought him to the king of Babylon; they brought him into custody, that his voice should no more be heard on the mountains of Israel. 10 Your mother was like a vine in a vineyard planted by the water, fruitful and full of branches by reason of abundant water. 11 Its strong stems became rulers' scepters; it towered aloft among the thick boughs; it was seen in its height with the mass of its branches. 12 But the vine was plucked up in fury, cast down to the ground; the east wind dried up its fruit; they were stripped off and withered. As for its strong stem, fire consumed it. 13 Now it is planted in the wilderness, in a dry and thirsty land. 14 And fire has gone out from the stem of its shoots, has consumed its fruit, so that there remains in it no strong stem, no scepter for ruling. This is a lamentation and has become a lamentation.

Ch 19 Ezekiel issues a call to repentance in parabolic language, as in chs 15–18. Here, he composes a lament poem appropriate for a funeral (cf Lm). He mourns the last leaders of Judah, described as offspring of a lioness (vv 1–9) and as the strongest stem growing on a vine (vv 10–14). Two of the kings who are mourned were sons of the same father; the third was a grandson. Though they are not expressly named, their identity emerges from allusions to circumstances in their lives. (TLSB)

With this chapter, we are abruptly plunged back into the political circumstances of Judah's last days, where we were in chapter 17. That the chapter begins with Yahweh's simple address to Ezekiel, "as for you" (אֲנִי־כִי), makes it sound more like a section within a unit than the beginning of a new unit. Indeed, Ezekiel, as the likely editor of his book, may well have placed chapter 19 here deliberately, as the last section of a unit that began with 17:1 and clearly ends at the close of chapter 19. (CC)

19:1 *lamentation*. A metered (three beats plus two beats) chant usually composed for funerals of fallen leaders (as in 2Sa 1:17–27), but often used sarcastically by the OT prophets to lament or to ironically predict the death of a nation (see Isa 14:4–21; Am 5:1–3). See also 2:10. (CSB)

princes. Kings. (CSB)

19:2 *lioness*. Although a lament, this chapter is an allegory like that in ch. 17 (to which it is related in content). Ch. 17 gives an interpretation, but this one does not. The lioness may be a personification of Israel (see v. 1), Judah (see 4:6; 8:1, 17; 9:9) or Jerusalem (see 5:5), all of which may be considered to be mother to the kings (see vv. 10–14). (CSB)

your mother? Judah. *lioness!* Asian lion was an emblem of Judah. The first king was Josiah's son Jehoahaz (vv 2–4; cf 2Ki 23:31–33). (TLSB)

19:3 *one of her cubs.* Jehoahaz (see 2Ki 23:31–34; Jer 22:10–12), who reigned only three months. (CSB)

devoured men. A reference to his oppressive policies (see Jer 22:13). (CSB)

Said also of the next king (v 6). During the regime of both rulers, many people lost their lives. (TLSB)

19:4 *he was caught ... pit ... hooks.* Together with vv 8–9, likely outlines ancient practices for capturing and controlling a lion. The animal was surrounded, driven by cries to a pit, netted, subdued with hooked poles, and bound. (TLSB)

19:5 *waited in vain.* Hbr implies that the first lion disappointed the mother's expectations. (TLSB)

another of her cubs. Perhaps Jehoiachin (who reigned only three months, 2Ki 24:8), but probably Zedekiah (of whom v. 7 appears a more likely description). Both were taken to Babylon (v. 9). If the reference is to Jehoiachin (2Ki 24:15), this was a true lament; if to Zedekiah, it was a prediction (2Ki 25:7). (CSB)

The second king was Jehoiachin, son of Jehoiakim and nephew of Jehoahaz (vv 5–9; cf 2Ki 24:8–15). (TLSB)

19:7 *seized their widows.* Charges the ruler with killing men and taking their wives. Cf 2Sm 11. (CSB)

19:8 *nations ... every side.* Hbr can be translated: "Nations attacked him from provinces all (TLSB)around." (TLSB)

19:10–14 The third and last to hold a ruler's scepter in Judah was Zedekiah, another son of Josiah (cf Jer 52:1–11). (TLSB)

19:10 *Your mother was like a vine.* The one previously pictured as a lioness (v. 2) is here a vine (see 15:2 and note; 17:7). (CSB)

in a vineyard. "In your blood," as the KJV translates (see ESV note), suggests the organic affinity of the stem (v 11) to the vine. (TLSB)

19:11 Difficult Hbr. The text seems to move from describing the kings of David's line to the one king under whom Judah collapsed. (TLSB)

rulers' scepters. Members of the royal family. (TLSB)

it towered aloft. Instead of hugging the ground as a fruitful vine. (TLSB)

19:12 *east wind.* Nebuchadnezzar and his army. (CSB)

19:13 *wilderness.* Babylonia—which to Israel seemed like a desert (see 20:35). (CSB)

19:14 The king's treachery brought on his and the monarchy's downfall (cf ch 15). (TLSB)

Fire. Rebellion (see 2Ki 24:20). (CSB)

has gone out. Ezekiel may have written the lamentation over Zedekiah after the fall of Jerusalem. However, a dirge may also be prophetic of a future calamity (cf Am 5). (TLSB)

no strong stem. Zedekiah. (CSB)

become a lamentation. Indicates repeated use (see Ps 137:1). (CSB)

Encloses or frames the passages (circling back to v 1). The wording also hints that Ezekiel wrote the lament for the fall of Jerusalem in 587 BC and so affirmed that his prophecy would come true. (TLSB)

Ch 19 Ezekiel laments the corrupt line of Judah. Instead of ruling through exemplary lives, the last three kings symbolize God's judgment. God withdrew His blessings from Judah, whose leaders rebelled against Him. However, God did not abandon His covenant promise to David (2Sm 7:16), fulfilling it in Jesus Christ, the descendant of David (Mt 1:6–16), the descendant of Abraham (Mt 1:2–5, 17). • Lord, we thank You for Your mercy. You remain faithful, fulfilling Your promise in Christ. Grant us true repentance and faithfulness. Amen. (TLSB)