

# Book of Ezekiel

## Chapter 19

*Theme: Elegy of Jehovah  
Over the Princes of Israel*

**Michael Fronczak**  
**Bible Study Resource Center**  
**Beit-Lechem Ministries**  
**564 Schaeffer Dr.**  
**Coldwater, Michigan 49036**  
**[www.biblestudyresourcecenter.com](http://www.biblestudyresourcecenter.com)**

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**Theme:** Elegy of Jehovah over the Princes of Israel

**Missler Introduction: Two Lion Whelps**

This chapter is a lamentation, a funeral dirge, showing the melancholy fate of the last 3 kings of Judah and the collapse of the whole Davidic Dynasty. The prophet deplores the misfortune of Jehoahaz and Jehoiachin under the figure of 2 lion whelps which were taken by hunters and confined in cages. Next he shows the desolation of Jerusalem under Zedekiah which he compares to a beautiful vine pulled up by the roots, withered, and at last burned.<sup>1</sup>

**Wycliffe: Allegory of the Two Lions and the Vine. 19:1-14.**

Two laments in elegiac meter (*qînâ*), under the guise of allegory, depict: (1) a lioness, the nation Israel, deprived successively of her two whelps—Jehoahaz, deported to Egypt (vv. 2-4), and Jehoiachin, taken captive to Babylon (vv. 5-9); and (2) a vine and its rods, torn up, planted in a wilderness, and consumed by fire out of one of its own rods; that is, Israel involved in destruction by her own King Zedekiah and exiled to Babylon (vv. 10-14).<sup>2</sup>

**BKC:** The parable of lamentation for Israel's princes (chap. 19)

Ezekiel concluded this section on the futility of false optimism (chaps. 12-19) with a lament or dirge for Israel and her leaders. This is the first of five laments in the book (cf. 26:17-18; 27; 28:12-19; 32:1-16). Three of the other laments were directed against Tyre, and the fourth (32:1-16) was for Egypt. A "lament" was a funeral song usually recited in honor of a dead person. The song generally stressed the good qualities of the departed and the tragedy or loss engendered by his death (cf. 2 Sam. 1:17-27).<sup>3</sup>

**McGee:** In chapter 19 we have two lamentations: the lamentations over the princes of Israel (vv. 1-9), and the lamentation over the land of Judah, the southern kingdom of Israel (vv. 10-14).<sup>4</sup>

The chapter contains two poems written in the *qinah* (Heb.) or "funeral-dirge" meter.

**ESV Introduction:** Lament for the Princes of Israel. Ezekiel presents two further political allegories, like that of ch. 17. Unfortunately the symbolism remains unexplained here. In 19:1-9, a lioness produces two cubs who represent the fate of two Davidic princes, while in vv. 10-14 a vine produces branches, as well as a particular "stem" that appears to represent a single Davidic figure. The whole is presented as a lamentation (v. 1), a distinctive form of Hebrew poetry. Some see this lament as ironic, a pseudo-lament that infuses the literary form of the dirge with disparaging content. Others hear in these words genuine sadness, and the conclusion in v. 14b suggests this is the better reading.

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<sup>1</sup> Chuck Missler, Notes on Ezekiel, khouse.org

<sup>2</sup> Pfeiffer, C. F. (1962). *The Wycliffe Bible commentary : Old Testament* (Eze 19:1). Chicago: Moody Press.

<sup>3</sup> Walvoord, J. F., Zuck, R. B., & Dallas Theological Seminary. (1983-). *The Bible knowledge commentary : An exposition of the scriptures* (Eze 18:25-32). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

<sup>4</sup> McGee, J. V. (1997). *Thru the Bible commentary* (electronic ed.) (Eze 18:32). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

The political lesson is that even Davidic princes are not immune from the divine consequences of their actions.

**Constable Introduction:** This prophecy shows that there were no more rulers left in Judah who could restore the nation to its former glory. Evidently the exiles hoped that some Davidic descendant would prove successful in overcoming the Babylonians and restoring Israel's sovereignty. This was their last hope, and it is the last prophecy in this section of the book that shows that such a hope was futile.

The prophecy contains two parts. The first part (vv. 1-9) uses the figure of a lion and her cubs to describe the Davidic line and two of its kings. The second part (vv. 10-14) uses the figure of a vine to describe Israel including its final strong branch or king.<sup>5</sup>

## The lion and her cubs 19:1-9

### Ezekiel 19:1

**Moreover take thou up a lamentation for the princes of Israel,**

**A lamentation** (*qîna*; see also 26:17; 27:2; 28:12; 32:2; Amos 5:1) is a poem in characteristic elegiac meter, in which a longer line, usually of three beats, is followed by a shorter one, usually of two beats (cf. Amos 5:1-3; Lam 1).<sup>6</sup>

**lamentation** (19:1, 14; 2 Sam. 1:17; Jer. 9:10) H7015: This noun refers to a type of poetic song with a distinctive meter, a dirge which was sung to express grief over someone's death. It is derived from a Hebrew verb that means "to sing a song of lament" (2 Sam. 1:17). Such songs would be sung during funeral rites. The prophets' use of the word was intended to suggest the coming death of Israel and other nations because of the inescapable condemnation they had incurred for their sin.<sup>7</sup>

**ESV 1–9:** A Lioness and Her Cubs. Both allegories refer to a **mother** (vv. 2, 10). One cannot be certain whether a literal queen mother is in view (then most likely Hamutal; 2 Kings 23:31; 24:18), or rather a symbolic reference to the nation of Judah (cf. Gen. 49:9 and "mother" of Babylon as nation, Jer. 50:12). Ezekiel 19:3–4 applies most closely to Jehoahaz, taken captive to Egypt by Pharaoh Neco (2 Kings 23:31–35). The second cub's identity in Ezek. 19:5–9 is much more problematic. Of possible candidates, Zedekiah remains plausible (see 2 Kings 25:6), but Jehoiachin is more likely (2 Kings 24:12). Both Jehoahaz and Jehoiachin reigned only three months, which is thought to be a problem for the negative assessment of the second "cub" (although cf. 2 Kings 24:8–9).

**Dake: [take thou up a lamentation for the princes of Israel]** In this chapter we have a lamentation concerning the princes of Israel, or Judah, whose princes alone were heirs of the Davidic and Messianic kingdom. Those of the ten tribes were usurpers, being out of

<sup>5</sup> Dr. Thomas Constable, Notes on Ezekiel, 2010

<sup>6</sup> Pfeiffer, C. F. (1962). *The Wycliffe Bible commentary : Old Testament* (Eze 19:1). Chicago: Moody Press.

<sup>7</sup> Nelson Study Bible

the Davidic line altogether. The lamentation warned Zedekiah that his fate would be the same as that of the captives who had already gone to Babylon (Ezekiel 19:1-14).<sup>8</sup>

**Clarke: Moreover take thou up a lamentation**—Declare what is the great subject of sorrow in Israel. Compose a funeral dirge. Show the melancholy fate of the kings who proceeded from Josiah. The prophet deploras the misfortune of Jehoahaz and Jehoiakim, under the figure of two lion whelps, which were taken by hunters, and confined in cages. Next he shows the desolation of Jerusalem under Zedekiah, which he compares to a beautiful vine pulled up by the roots, withered, and at last burned. Calmet justly observes, that the style of this song is beautiful, and the allegory well supported throughout.<sup>9</sup>

**LAN:** Ezekiel used illustrations to communicate many of his messages. With the picture of the lioness and her cubs, he raised the curiosity of his listeners. The lioness symbolized the nation of Judah, and the two cubs were two of its kings. The first cub was King Jehoahaz, who was taken captive to Egypt in 609 B.C. by Pharaoh Neco (2 Kings 23:31-33). The second cub was either King Jehoiachin, who had already been taken into captivity in Babylon (2 Kings 24:8ff), or King Zedekiah, who soon would be (2 Kings 25:7). This illustration showed that for Judah, there was no hope for a quick return from exile, and no escape from the approaching Babylonian armies.<sup>10</sup>

**BKC:** 1-2. This lament was for the princes of Israel. “Princes” was the title Ezekiel gave the kings residing in Jerusalem (see comments on 7:27). At the time of this lament Zedekiah was king. The date was 592 B.C., five years before the fall of Jerusalem. Thus Ezekiel was taking up a funeral dirge even though the city’s “death” was still in the future. Jerusalem’s fall was so certain that Ezekiel considered it inevitable. Part of this dirge traces the fate of Jehoahaz and Jehoiachin—two of the three kings who preceded Zedekiah. The dirge was not over one individual; it was being sung for the Davidic dynasty and the “death” of its rule.

In Ezekiel’s lament he recalled with fondness the lioness who had produced the fallen lions. What a lioness was your mother among the lions! Since the “lions” were the kings, some scholars feel that the “lioness” was Hamutual, wife of Josiah and mother of Jehoahaz and Zedekiah (cf. 2 Kings 23:31; 24:18). However, this seems unlikely for two reasons. First, the “king” in Ezekiel 19:5-9 seems to be Jehoiachin; and his mother was Nehushta, another wife of Josiah (cf. 2 Kings 24:8). Second, the “mother” of the kings, referred to throughout Ezekiel 19, seems to depict more than a physical mother. In verses 10-14 the nation herself is the “mother” of the kings. Verse 13 seems to allude to Israel’s captivity. Therefore the lioness/mother in this chapter is the nation Israel. She was the one who set up her kings but saw them destroyed, and she was the one who would go into captivity.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Dake Study Notes, Dake’s Study Bible

<sup>9</sup> Adam Clarke’s Commentary on the Old Testament

<sup>10</sup> Life Application Bible Notes

<sup>11</sup> Walvoord, J. F., Zuck, R. B., & Dallas Theological Seminary. (1983-). *The Bible knowledge commentary : An exposition of the scriptures* (Eze 19:1–2). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

### **OTS: Parable of the Lion Cubs (19:1–9).**

The first parabolic lament concerns the princes of Israel. Ezekiel likened the royal house of Judah to a lioness which reared her cubs in the midst of the lions (other royal houses). The first cub became a young lion. Nations gathered against him, captured him, and “they brought him with hooks to the land of Egypt.” The lioness was disappointed in the loss of her progeny (19:1–4). The reference here is to Jehoahaz, the son of Josiah, who briefly succeeded his father on the throne in 609 B.C.. Pharaoh Neco and his allies took Jehoahaz captive to Egypt (cf. 2 Kgs 23:33; Jer 22:10–12).

Since her hope for her first cub was disappointed, the lioness reared a second cub to maturity. He became a ruthless young lion. He devoured men and “knew their widows,” i.e., caused many women to lose their husbands. He “laid waste their cities” by causing the king of Babylon to come against the land. Because of the “sound of his roaring,” i.e., his boasting, he brought desolation upon the land. Nations beset the young lion and captured him. They put him in a cage and took him to the king of Babylon (19:5–9). The reference here is to the father/son kings Jehoiakim and Jehoiachin. The policies of the father brought the armies of Babylon to the gates of Jerusalem in 597 B.C.. The son was deported to Babylon after a brief reign of three months.<sup>12</sup>

**Chuck Smith:** So this is a lamentation. Notice at the beginning he says a lamentation and then at the end he said, "This is a lamentation and shall be a lamentation." Now if I were a Bible critic, I would tell you why this wasn't a lamentation. If I were in the school of higher criticism, one of those biblical scholars.<sup>13</sup>

**Constable:** Ezekiel was to lament (Heb. *qinah*) for the princes of Israel. This is the first of five laments in Ezekiel (cf. 26:17-18; 27; 28:12-19; 32:1-16).

Laments usually utilize the *qinah* or limping form of rhythm in Hebrew, and this one does. The *qinah* form consists normally of three accented words followed by two accented words in a couplet. For example in verse 2 in the NASB this rhythm is discernible: "She lay down among young lions; she reared her cubs." Usually translations cannot capture the rhythm of the Hebrew text. This rhythm gives a sorrowful feeling to the composition as it is read in Hebrew. The form is quite common in the Old Testament, especially in Lamentations, Psalms, and some of the prophetic books.<sup>14</sup>

A dirge was normally sung or chanted, by professional mourners after the death of the deceased and during his funeral. Ezekiel expressed the Lord's sadness over the Judean leadership's failure by chanting this elegy over her final rulers prior to their deaths. However this dirge is also a riddle (cf. 17:1-10). Ezekiel used the term "princes" to describe Judah's kings (7:27; 12:10, 19; et al.).

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<sup>12</sup> Smith, J. E. (1992). *The Major Prophets* (Eze 19:1–9). Joplin, Mo.: College Press.

<sup>13</sup> Chuck Smith, Pastor/Founder, Calvary Chapel, Costa Mesa, CA, Notes on Ezekiel

<sup>14</sup> For other characteristics of the *qinah* genre, see Block, *The Book . . .*, pp. 592-93.

## **Ezekiel 19:2**

**And say, What is thy mother? A lioness: she lay down among lions, she nourished her whelps among young lions.**

**[thy mother]** The mother of Zedekiah and Jehoahaz, wife of Josiah (2 Kings 23:31; 2 Kings 24:18). The other son of Josiah, Jehoiakim, had a different mother (2 Kings 23:36).

**Wycliffe:** The nation Israel (or Judah) is pictured as a mother of mighty kings, a lioness, in power and majesty. Lions were common in ancient Palestine (Jer 49:19; 50:44; Zech 11:3; Song 4:8; Isa 30:6). Five different words for them are found in Job 4:10, 11, three of which occur in this verse. The lion became practically extinct in Palestine after the Crusades. 3. One of her whelps. Jehoahaz. Learned to catch the prey; i.e., became a ruling king. 4. The nations sounded an alarm (RSV). Read the MT as a causative, *caused a cry to be heard*. Cf. Isa 31:4; Jer 50:29. Jehoahaz was carried to Egypt by Pharaoh-necho (II Kgs 23:33, 34).<sup>15</sup>

**McGee:** This is not the lamentation of Ezekiel, as some Bible commentators have attempted to say. This is the lamentation of the Lord, actually the lamentation of the same One who later wept over Jerusalem (Matt. 23:37–39). He is the One who is here weeping over the princes of Judah. The princes were a group of people in that land who had very few who were concerned about them. But God was concerned. Who shed tears over them? God did.

By the way, who is concerned about you today? I suspect there are very few. Are the people where you work really concerned about you? Are the people in your church really concerned about you? Is your family concerned? A successful businessman once told me, “I honestly wonder who really cares about me today. Everybody, including my family, is only interested in what they can get out of me.” How sad that is! But God is concerned about you, and He is concerned about me. That’s quite comforting in this tremendous universe in which I live. I could get lost in it, I am so small. But He has His eye out and has a concern for each one of us.

The princes of Judah were people for whom not too many in that day wanted to shed tears. They were Jehoahaz and Jehoiachin, two kings who were about as sorry as they come. God alone is concerned over them.

When He begins to speak of the “lion,” He is speaking of the lion of Judah. “Judah is a lion’s whelp . . .”—that is the way Judah was marked out by Jacob in Genesis 49:9 as he gave his prophecies concerning each of his twelve sons. In Numbers 23:24 we read, “Behold, the people shall rise up as a great lion, and lift up himself as a young lion . . .” The Lord Jesus is called the Lion of the tribe of Juda in Revelation 5:5: “And one of the elders saith unto me, Weep not: behold, the Lion of the tribe of Juda, the Root of David, hath prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof.”<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Pfeiffer, C. F. (1962). *The Wycliffe Bible commentary : Old Testament* (Eze 19:2). Chicago: Moody Press.

<sup>16</sup> McGee, J. V. (1997). *Thru the Bible commentary* (electronic ed.) (Eze 19:3). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

**Constable:** The prophet compared the former Davidic kings of Judah to a lioness. This was a common symbol of rulers in the ancient Near East, and the Israelites used the figure for the Davidic kings (Gen. 49:9; Num. 23:24; 1 Kings 10:19-20; Mic. 5:8; cf. Rev. 5:5).<sup>296</sup> This lioness was responsible for producing and nurturing young lion cubs, the kings that followed in the Davidic line.

**Nelson:** Most likely the lioness and the vine in your bloodline (v. 10) both represented the nation of Israel since each was a “mother” of kings—the cubs and the branches. The vine and lion images are common symbols for Hebrew royalty and nationality (see 15:1–6; 17:1–10; Gen. 49:9; Num. 23:24; Ps. 80:8–16; Isa. 5:1–7; Mic. 5:8). The first cub brought ... with chains to the land of Egypt was Jehoahaz, who was captured and imprisoned by Pharaoh Necho in 609 B.C. (2 Kin. 23:31–34; 2 Chr. 36:1–4). The second cub that was trapped in their pit was the destructive Jehoiachin, who gave out false hopes of revival and was taken captive by the king of Babylon (Nebuchadnezzar) in 597 B.C. (2 Kin. 25:27–30; 2 Chr. 36:9, 10).<sup>17</sup>

**Clarke: What is thy mother? A lioness**—Judea may here be the mother; the lioness, Jerusalem. Her lying down among lions, her having confederacy with the neighboring kings; for lion here means king.

### **Ezekiel 19:3**

**And she brought up one of her whelps: it became a young lion, and it learned to catch the prey; it devoured men.**

The reign of Jehoahaz was one of oppression and cruelty. He made his subjects his prey, and devoured their substance.

**[one of her whelps]** Jehoahaz who reigned only three months and was taken captive to Egypt (Ezekiel 19:3-4; 2 Kings 23:31-33). Jeremiah also lamented his fate (Jeremiah 22:10-12).

**Clarke: She brought up one of her whelps**—Jehoahaz, son of Josiah, whose father was conquered and slain by Pharaoh-necho, king of Egypt.

**BKC 3-4:** The lioness, Israel, brought up one of her cubs, and he became a strong lion (a king). This lion was Jehoahaz who came to the throne after Josiah’s untimely death (see “Historical Background” in the *Introduction*). After a reign of only three months he was deposed by Pharaoh Neco II, who led him with hooks (probably literal hooks in his nose attached to a rope-leash; cf. v. 9) to the land of Egypt. In Egypt Jehoahaz died in captivity (cf. 2 Kings 23:31-34; Jer. 22:11-12).<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> The Nelson Study Bible

<sup>18</sup> Walvoord, J. F., Zuck, R. B., & Dallas Theological Seminary. (1983-). *The Bible knowledge commentary : An exposition of the scriptures* (Eze 19:3–4). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

**Constable:** One particular ruler in the Davidic line became lion-like. He tore his prey and devoured people. When his neighbors heard about him, someone captured him and brought him as a prisoner to Egypt.

This describes the character and fate of King Jehoahaz who did evil in the Lord's sight by devouring people in his own kingdom through oppression and injustice (2 Kings 23:31-34). Even though his reign lasted only three months (in 609 B.C.) it was a violent and brutal period in Israel's history. Pharaoh Neco placed Jehoahaz on Judah's throne after Neco killed his father, Josiah, at Megiddo thereby gaining sovereignty over Judah. However, Jehoahaz proved to be unmanageable, so Pharaoh took him to Egypt where he finally died (2 Kings 23:31-34; 2 Chron. 36:1-4; Jer. 22:10-12). The Judeans had hoped that Jehoahaz would return from Egypt and rule again in Judah, but that was not to be the case (cf. Jer. 22:10-12).

**Clarke: It learned to catch the prey**—His reign was a reign of oppression and cruelty. He made his subjects his prey, and devoured their substance.

### **Ezekiel 19:4**

**The nations also heard of him; he was taken in their pit, and they brought him with chains unto the land of Egypt.**

The king of Egypt, whose subjects were many nations, marched against Jerusalem, took Jehoahaz prisoner, and brought him to Egypt.

[**pit**] The reference here is the making of a pit to catch a lion or other wild beast. A hole was dug in the ground and the opening covered over with branches and sod. The animal treading on such a covering would fall into the pit and be taken (Psalm 7:15; Psalm 9:15; Psalm 35:7; Psalm 94:13; Proverbs 26:27; Isaiah 38:17).

### **Ezekiel 19:5**

**Now when she saw that she had waited, and her hope was lost, then she took another of her whelps, and made him a young lion.**

[**another of her whelps, and made him a young lion**] Jehoiakim, who fits the description here more than Jehoiachin who only reigned three months (Ezekiel 19:5-9; 2 Kings 23:36; Jeremiah 22:11-19).

**Clarke: When she saw that she had waited**—Being very weak, the Jews found that they could not resist with any hope of success; so the king of Egypt was permitted to do as he pleased.

**Clarke: She took another of her whelps**—Jehoiakim.

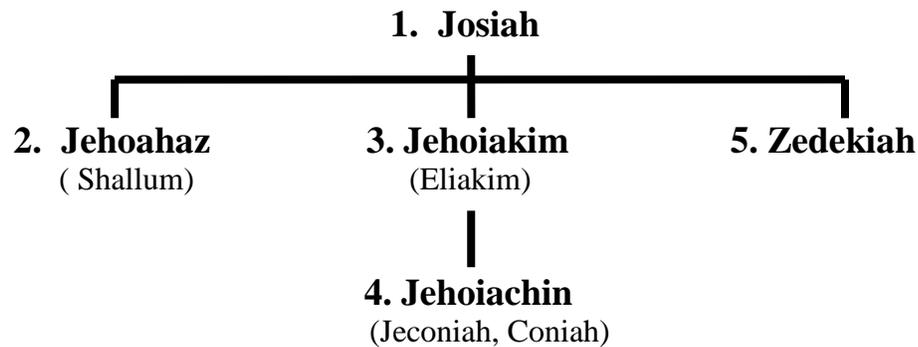
**Clarke: And made him a young lion**—King of Judea.

**Wycliffe: Was baffled** (RSV; AV, *had waited*). Reading *nô·ălâ* in place of MT *nôhălâ*, “waited.” Another of her whelps. Jehoiachin. 6. He prowled (RSV). *Walked about*. 7. And he ravaged their strongholds (RSV). This translation follows the Targum instead of MT *and he knew his widows*. Cf. Jer 2:15, 16; 4:7; 5:6; 25:37. 8. (Snares) on every side. Cf. 12:13; 17:20, where it is also parallel with “net.” 9. Nebuchadnezzar carried Jehoiachin to Babylon (II Kgs 24:15).<sup>19</sup>

**Constable:** With the death of this cub the lioness took another of her offspring and made him dominant. He gained his position among the other rulers of the area and also became violent and destructive, like the first cub. He so devastated his own land that the people in it despaired. His neighbors also trapped this lion and took him captive to Babylon thus ending his reign.

This describes the career of King Jehoiachin, who also ruled over Judah for only three months (in 598-597 B.C.). Probably the writer omitted referring to King Jehoiakim, the intervening king, because he was not taken into exile like Jehoahaz and Jehoiachin. Other interpreters believe King Jehoiakim is the person in view.<sup>297</sup> The Babylonians captured Jehoiachin and took him into exile in 597 B.C. Later he enjoyed a measure of freedom, but he never returned to rule over Judah (2 Kings 24:8-17; 25:27-30; 2 Chron. 36:8-10).

### The Last Five Kings of Judah



**BKC 5-9:** The king after Jehoahaz was Jehoiakim, but Ezekiel did not refer to him in this chapter. Ezekiel emphasized that Zedekiah would be taken into captivity, so he mentioned only those kings who suffered a similar fate, Jehoahaz and Jehoiachin. Jehoiakim died in Jerusalem, so he was not included in this lament. (See the chart “The Last Five Kings of Judah,” near 2 Kings 24.)

Jehoiachin, another of Israel’s cubs who became a strong lion, reigned for only three months before he was deposed by Nebuchadnezzar. His brief reign (described in Ezek. 19:5-7) was a time of terror and destruction. With lionlike ferocity Jehoiachin wrought havoc, breaking down their strongholds and ... their towns. The land, Israel, and all who were in it were terrified by his roaring. The “terror” was removed only when he was dethroned and deported by Nebuchadnezzar. With hooks (cf. v. 4) they pulled him into a cage (perhaps *sûġar*, “cage,” means a neck yoke, based on the Akk. *šigāru*) and brought

<sup>19</sup> Pfeiffer, C. F. (1962). *The Wycliffe Bible commentary : Old Testament* (Eze 19:5–10). Chicago: Moody Press.

him to the king of Babylon. Nebuchadnezzar imprisoned Jehoiachin in Babylon because of the revolt his father Jehoiakim had begun (2 Kings 24:8-17). Jehoiachin remained in prison for 37 years till he was released when Evil-Merodach (Amel-Marduk) succeeded his father Nebuchadnezzar on the throne in Babylon (2 Kings 25:27-30; Jer. 52:31-34). However, Jehoiachin remained in Babylon; he never returned to the land he had ravaged.<sup>20</sup>

### **Ezekiel 19:6**

**And he went up and down among the lions, he became a young lion, and learned to catch the prey, and devoured men.**

**Clarke: And he went up and down among the lions**—He became a perfect heathen, and made Judea as idolatrous as any of the surrounding nations. He reigned eleven years, a monster of iniquity, 2 Kings 23:30, etc.

### **Ezekiel 19:7**

**And he knew their desolate palaces, and he laid waste their cities; and the land was desolate, and the fulness thereof, by the noise of his roaring.**

Jehoiachin became a perfect heathen, and made Judea as idolatrous as any of the surrounding nations. He was a monster of iniquity.

### **Ezekiel 19:8**

**Then the nations set against him on every side from the provinces, and spread their net over him: he was taken in their pit.**

Bear in mind that Nebuchadnezzar used his allies to set Jehoiachin's clock when the time came. By the way, it was not only in chains, they used hooks, sometimes there was even a ring or hook in the nose.

**Clarke: The nations set against him**—The Chaldeans, Syrians, Moabites, and Ammonites, and the king of Babylon—king of many nations.

**Clarke: He was taken**—The city was taken by Nebuchadnezzar; and Jehoiakim was taken prisoner, and sent in chains to Babylon.

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<sup>20</sup> Walvoord, J. F., Zuck, R. B., & Dallas Theological Seminary. (1983-). *The Bible knowledge commentary : An exposition of the scriptures* (Eze 19:5–9). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

### **Ezekiel 19:9**

**And they put him in ward in chains, and brought him to the king of Babylon: they brought him into holds, that his voice should no more be heard upon the mountains of Israel.**

[they put him in ward in chains] Babylonians (2 Chron. 36:5-7).

**Clarke: That his voice should no more be heard**—He continued in prison many years, till the reign of Evil-merodach, who set him at liberty, but never suffered him to return to the mountains of Israel. “The unhappy fate of these princes, mentioned verses 4, 8, 9, is a just subject of lamentation.”—Newcome.

On the exile as judgment, see note on Isa. 39:6.

## **The vine and its branch 19:10-14**

### **Ezekiel 19:10**

**Thy mother *is* like a vine in thy blood, planted by the waters: she was fruitful and full of branches by reason of many waters.**

This now is the lamentation over the land of Judah. These people came into that land, and God blessed them. They were like a vine planted in the land. Now He has plucked up the vine, and they are carried away into captivity. This is a sad song depicting the sordid history of the nation.

**Dake: [Thy mother is like a vine in thy blood, planted by the waters: she was fruitful and full of branches by reason of many waters]** Still talking to Zedekiah, as in Ezekiel 19:2. His mother, Hamutal, is compared to a vine planted by waters that is fruitful and full of branches. She had strong rods (Jehoahaz and Zedekiah) that bore her stature which was exalted among the thick branches; and she appeared in her height with her many other branches. She was plucked up in fury and cast down to the ground to be destroyed (Ezekiel 19:10-12). This refers to her prosperity before she was taken into captivity with Zedekiah, and then to her hopes being dashed to the ground and destroyed.

**Clarke: Thy mother (Jerusalem) is like a vine in thy blood**—Of this expression I know not what to make. Some think the meaning is “A vine planted by the waters to produce the blood of the grape.” See Deuteronomy 32:14. Others, for *bedamecha*, in thy blood, would read *berimmon*, in or at a pomegranate; like a vine planted by or beside a pomegranate-tree, by which it was to be supported. And so the Septuagint and Arabic appear to have read. Calmet reads *carmecha*, thy vineyard, instead of *bedamecha*, in thy blood. Here is no change but a *resh* for a *daleth*.

This reading is supported by one of Kennicott’s and one of De Rossi’s MSS.: “Thy mother is like a vine in thy vineyard, planted by the waters.” Though this is rather an unusual construction yet it seems the best emendation. Of the textual reading no sense can be made. There is a corruption somewhere.

**Full on branches**—Many princes. See next verse.

**Wycliffe:** The Vine Uprooted and Consumed by Fire. 19:10-14.

Another metaphor is introduced here. Israel is compared to a vine. See also Isa 5:1-7; 27:2, 3; Ps 80:9; Mk 12:1-9. In a vineyard (RSV) appears in two manuscripts, in contrast to MT *in thy blood*. 11. Its strongest rod became a ruler's sceptre (RSV). So the LXX B, the Old Latin, the Arabic, and verses 12, 14. This rod is Zedekiah (or Jehoiachin). 12. But she, the nation, was plucked up. Cf. 17:9; Amos 9:15. The east wind, Babylon, dried up her fruit. 13. The nation is now in exile amid conditions where national life cannot thrive. 14. The fire has gone out from its stem (RSV). The vine was consumed by fire from one of her own rods. Zedekiah by his rebellion brought destruction on both nation and dynasty (II Kgs 24:20ff.; Jer 52:3). This (has become) a lamentation. That is, the dirge is finished, and has become history (cf. 32:16).<sup>21</sup>

**BKC 10-11:** In verses 10-14 Ezekiel addressed King Zedekiah directly. He is the subject of the rest of the dirge. The mother, Israel, was like a vine. Since vines were common in Israel, the writers of Scripture often referred to Israel and others as vines (cf. Isa. 5:1-7; Ezek. 15; 17:5-10; Matt. 21:33-41; John 15:1-8). In her past glory, Israel was, figuratively speaking, fruitful and full of branches. It had prospered under the blessing of God, and had produced many rulers. Its branches were strong, fit for a ruler's scepter. The exact identification of the ruler(s) intended by Ezekiel's metaphor is unknown. Possibly Ezekiel was not pointing to specific rulers in Israel's past, but was merely showing that Israel's past was glorious and that it included many mighty leaders.<sup>22</sup>

**OTS: Parable of the Vine (19:10–14).**

In the second parabolic lament Ezekiel likened the “mother” of the royal house to a vine full of “blood,” i.e., sap. This vigorous vine flourished beside the waters. It produced “strong branches” for scepters of rulers. The vine grew to great height. Then, however, it was plucked up and cast to the ground. Its fruit was withered by the east wind (19:10–12a). The reference here is to the heavy taxation which Nebuchadnezzar imposed on Zedekiah.

The “strong branch” was torn off so that it withered. The fire (of war) consumed the branch, i.e., Zedekiah. Now the vine, i.e., the people of Judah, was planted in a wilderness, i.e. the exile in Babylon. Fire had gone out from its branch to consume its fruit and shoots. The foolish rebellion of Zedekiah against Babylon was the cause of the ruin which befell Judah. No strong branch remained on the vine to serve as a scepter to rule. The deportation of Zedekiah brought a temporary halt to the rule of the house of David. This sorrow over the fate of the nation and her royal house became the general theme of lamentation after the destruction of Jerusalem in 586 B.C. (19:12b–14).<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Pfeiffer, C. F. (1962). *The Wycliffe Bible commentary : Old Testament* (Eze 19:10). Chicago: Moody Press.

<sup>22</sup> Walvoord, J. F., Zuck, R. B., & Dallas Theological Seminary. (1983-). *The Bible knowledge commentary : An exposition of the scriptures* (Eze 19:10–11). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

<sup>23</sup> Smith, J. E. (1992). *The Major Prophets* (Eze 19:10–14). Joplin, Mo.: College Press.

**ESV 10-14:** A Vine and Its Stem(s). For details, cf. the parable of the eagles and the vine in ch. 17. Whereas the lioness-and-cubs story fixed attention on the fate of individuals, the vine-and-stems (Hb. *mattot*, plural of *matteh*) passage makes more inclusive reference to the whole dynasty. Verses 12b and 14 of ch. 19 single out one particular **strong stem** (Hb. *matteh*), normally translated “staff,” only here referring to a living branch. Wordplay undoubtedly motivated this choice. The reference seems to be to Zedekiah, the last reigning Davidic figure, whose attempts at power politics ended in disaster.

**Nelson:** These verses mention the fruitful monarchical period of the past, but the focus was on the present distress and promised judgment. At this time, Judah had already experienced two invasions by Babylon, called the east wind (see 15:1–8; 19:5–9). Ezekiel and the other exiles were presently living in that desert land. Neither the current king Zedekiah (the rod of her branches) nor any other leaders were fit to rule. Judah’s rulers were responsible for the nation’s horrible condition (see Jer. 22:10–13). The immediate source of rebellion and the cause of imminent judgment was Zedekiah, who would be deported when Jerusalem was destroyed in 586 B.C. (2 Kin. 24; 25). wilderness ... dry and thirsty land: To anyone who loved the covenantal promises focused on God’s worship in Jerusalem, any alternative to Jerusalem was akin to living in the desert.

**Constable 10-11:** Ezekiel changed the figure of the Davidic dynasty to that of a fruitful vine in a vineyard. This vine was fruitful and it flourished because it enjoyed abundant resources. The Davidic dynasty was like a fruitful vine among the other nations because God blessed it (15:1-6; 17:1-10; Deut. 8:7-8; Ps. 80:8-16; Isa. 5:1-7; 24:7; 27:2-6; Jer. 2:21; 6:9; cf. Matt. 21:33-41; John 15:1-8). Its branches were so strong that they proved usable as scepters for rulers. The vine became exceedingly large in the season of its greatest glory, the days of David and Solomon.

### **Ezekiel 19:11**

**And she had strong rods for the sceptres of them that bare rule, and her stature was exalted among the thick branches, and she appeared in her height with the multitude of her branches.**

**Clarke:** She had strong rods—Zedekiah, and his many sons.

**Clarke:** Her stature was exalted—Zedekiah grew proud of his numerous offspring and prosperity; and although he copied the example of Jehoiakim, yet he thought he might safely rebel against the king of Babylon.

**LAN: 11-12** Not even the political and military might of Judah’s kings could save the nation. Like branches of a vine, they would be cut off and uprooted by “the east wind”—the powerful Babylonian army.

## **Ezekiel 19:12**

**But she was plucked up in fury, she was cast down to the ground, and the east wind dried up her fruit: her strong rods were broken and withered; the fire consumed them.**

“**East Wind**” - here is Nebuchadnezzar.

**Clarke: But she was plucked up in fury**—Jerusalem; taken after a violent and most destructive siege; Nebuchadnezzar being violently enraged against Zedekiah for breaking his oath to him.

**Clarke: She was cast down to the ground**—Jerusalem was totally ruined, by being burned to the ground.

**Clarke: Her strong rods were broken**—The children of Zedekiah were slain before his eyes, and after that his own eyes pulled out; and he was laden with chains, and carried into Babylon.

The reference here is to Zedekiah, who brought the overthrow of the kingdom and the earthly monarchy by breaking the covenant (17:15). Though the tearing up of the vine which had been transplanted to a dry land had already begun with the exile of Jeconiah, it was not completed until the destruction of Jerusalem and the removal of Zedekiah from the throne, the latter of which was unfulfilled at the writing of this verse.<sup>24</sup>

**BKC 12-14:** The vine’s past glory contrasted sharply with its condition in Ezekiel’s day. Israel the vine was uprooted in fury and thrown to the ground. It was shriveled and its branches were burned. Ezekiel did not explain the cause for this judgment, but in chapters 16-17 he had already stated why Israel went from blessing to disaster. The vine forgot that God was her source of blessing. Therefore God “uprooted” the nation, deporting her from the land.

The east wind would have conveyed a double meaning to Israel. The prevailing winds in Israel are from the west and bring moisture-laden air from the Mediterranean Sea. The east wind, known as the sirocco, blows on Israel from the desert in the east, bringing severe problems. It can wither vegetation (Gen. 41:6), destroy houses (Job 1:19), and cause severe distress (Jonah 4:8). However, Ezekiel’s east wind referred to more than the sirocco. Babylon was also east of Israel; and when she “blew in” from the east, the nation shriveled under the heat of her oppression.

Ultimately Israel fell to Babylon. Ezekiel’s statement, Now it is planted in the desert, in a dry and thirsty land, probably refers to Babylon’s destruction of Israel. As the sirocco destroyed vegetation in its path, so Israel would languish under Babylon’s attacks. However, Ezekiel was possibly alluding to the Babylonian Captivity which the nation would soon face. The luxuriant vine of the nation would be uprooted from her homeland and cast down on foreign soil.

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<sup>24</sup> Believer’s Study Bible

God's judgment would also affect the royal line. No strong branch is left on it fit for a ruler's scepter. The nation which had produced mighty rulers in the past (Ezek. 19:11) now would have no king. After Zedekiah was overthrown by Babylon, no king from the Davidic dynasty replaced him. Not till Christ returns will a "ruler's scepter" again arise in the line of David and reign as Israel's king.<sup>25</sup>

**Constable 12-14:** However, others uprooted this vine in their fury, trod it underfoot, and cut off its fruitfulness as with a hot east wind (from Babylon; cf. 17:6-10, 15; Ps. 89:30-37). Its strong branch, King Zedekiah, was cut off so it withered and burned up. This was a prediction of Zedekiah's future. Assuming the chronological order of the prophecies in this book, Ezekiel evidently gave this one between 592 and 591 B.C., which was after the reigns of Jehoahaz and Jehoiachin and during the reign of Zedekiah (597-586 B.C.). Zedekiah went into captivity in 586 B.C. He had been responsible for much of the destruction that had overtaken Judah. Perhaps one reason for the change in the figures describing Israel's kings, from lions to a vine, was that Zedekiah, the branch (v. 12), was not a king approved by the Judeans but a puppet of the Babylonians, though he was in the Davidic line. Scripture gives us little information about Zedekiah's domestic policies. The vine was now in the wilderness, a place of limited resources. It had burned up so there were no more strong shoots or fruit left in it. No scepter was in it now; there was no Davidic king who could rule over Israel. The vine was not completely destroyed, but it languished having been transplanted to a hostile environment. Another view sees

Zedekiah as the fire that consumed the shoots and fruit of the Davidic line. The writer identified this piece again as a lamentation, a funeral dirge or elegy that the Jews used to describe their sorrow over the fate of the Davidic rulers of their nation.

It is appropriate that this last section in the part of the book that consists of Yahweh's reply to the invalid hopes of the Israelites (chs. 12—19) should be a lament. Judah's doom was certain, so a funeral dirge was fitting. All the exiles could do was mourn the divine judgment on their nation that was to reach its climax very soon.

Jerusalem's fall was so certain that Ezekiel considered it inevitable. . . .

The dirge was not over one individual; it was being sung for the Davidic dynasty and the 'death' of its rule.

Not until Jesus Christ returns to the earth to reign will a strong branch and the ruler's scepter arise in the line of David again (cf. Gen. 49:10; Isa. 11:1; Jer. 23:5; 33:15).

### **Ezekiel 19:13**

**And now she is planted in the wilderness, in a dry and thirsty ground.**

Chaldea was well watered and fertile; but it is the condition of the captive people, not that of the land, which is referred to here.

**Clarke: And now she is planted in the wilderness**—In the land of Chaldea, whither the people have been carried captives; and which, compared with their own land, was to them a dreary wilderness.

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<sup>25</sup> Walvoord, J. F., Zuck, R. B., & Dallas Theological Seminary. (1983-). *The Bible knowledge commentary : An exposition of the scriptures* (Eze 19:12-14). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

**Dake:** [now she is planted in the wilderness] Now refers to the days of this prophecy when she was taken captive. She is compared then to a vine planted in a desolate wilderness, a fire having gone out of her branches devouring her fruit and leaving her barren. This refers to Zedekiah who caused her hopes to be destroyed by his rebellion against Nebuchadnezzar. After this the kingdom of Judah ceased to be and she had a son no more to rule in Judah (Ezekiel 19:13-14).

### **Ezekiel 19:14**

**And fire is gone out of a rod of her branches, which hath devoured her fruit, so that she hath no strong rod to be a sceptre to rule. This is a lamentation, and shall be for a lamentation.**

**Clarke: Fire is gone out**—A vindictive and murderous disposition has taken hold:—  
**Of a rod of her branches**—Ishmael, son of Nethaniah, who was of the blood-royal of Judah:—

**Clarke: Hath devoured her fruit**—Hath assassinated Gedaliah, slain many people, and carried off others into the country of the Ammonites. But he was pursued by Jonathan, the son of Kareah, who slew many of his adherents, and delivered much of the people.

**Clarke: She hath no strong rod**—None of the blood-royal of Judah left. And from that time not one of her own royal race ever sat upon the throne of Israel.

**Clarke: This is a lamentation**—This is a most lamentable business.

**Clarke: And shall be for a lamentation**—These predictions shall be so punctually fulfilled, and the catastrophe shall be so complete, that it shall ever remain as a lamentation; as this state of Jerusalem shall never be restored. Even to the present day this, to a Jew, is a subject of mourning.

**Missler:** God's wrath was kindled by the perjury of Zedekiah who by his perjury brought about the destruction of Jerusalem by fire.

The vine, of course, was Israel, as we saw in Chapters 15 and 17. (See also Ps 10 and Isa 5)

In Ezekiel 19 the Davidic Dynasty is ended. There was no lawful king left. The royal line was cursed. That leaves only One who can be heir to the Throne of David. The One who is alive today. He never sat on David's throne as the angel promised Mary He would. He will sit on that throne as the Old Testament says and as Gabriel confirmed to Mary. The only rightful King left is the Messiah Himself. Ezekiel tonight dealt with some materials that need to reach you and me quite apart from this faith-works thing. We are individually accountable.

But we do not have to stand before the Throne of Grace in our own righteousness. We know from reading Paul and others that on that basis we could not make it. But we can stand before the Throne of Grace in the righteousness of Jesus Christ, just for the

asking for it.

Another point we should come out of these quaint historic episodes with is the fact that God is real. He does not mess around. The way He dealt with those kings can serve as a sobering lesson for us. God has gone through incredible trouble to lay out his plan for our redemption. He fulfilled His commitments to the letter, precisely, faithfully, without exception.