



# Book of Ezekiel

## Chapter 29

*Theme: Prophecy against Egypt,  
Lamentation for Egypt*

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**Theme:** Prophecy Against Egypt, lamentation for Egypt

**Missler Introduction: Judgments Upon Egypt**

In the next four chapters, Ezekiel focuses on the Lord's coming judgment upon Egypt. Our awareness of Egypt starts early in Genesis where it became a refuge for Joseph. As Joseph brought his brothers to Egypt, they were under an administration which was favorable to them. We all know the story of how a successor pharaoh arose who knew not Joseph, and became adverse to the Hebrew people. Under that regime they were oppressed into slavery. We are familiar with the story in Exodus of how they were all delivered from that oppression. Moses delivered Israel from both Egypt and from the rulership of Pharaoh.

From that point on, with a few small exceptions, through the rest of history the interests of Egypt were adverse to Israel. From a Biblical point of view, Egypt was frequently spoken of in a typological sense. Many equate it with sin, or as a type of the world, particularly as viewed in the Book of Exodus.

Egypt had a peculiar role, particularly in the exodus period. It became a type of the world in many ways. She had a remarkable leaning toward peculiar forms of idolatry; and the 10 plagues were aimed principally at her various forms of worship - the lice, the frogs, and so forth...

Prior to Ezekiel's prophecies here, there was a prominent pharaoh by the name of Pharaoh-necho who invaded Israel. A passage in Isaiah infers that he probably was not Egyptian, but may have been an Assyrian. He was an enemy of Babylon.

In that whole period of time there was a struggle for power between the Nile and the Euphrates, between the Egyptians and the Babylonians. As they pulled back and forth, Israel (or Judah) was caught right in the middle. Nebuchadnezzar defeated Pharaoh-necho in the Battle of Carchemish in about 605 B.C. and Babylon thus became the dominant power in those early ages.<sup>1</sup>

**Constable: JUDGMENT ON EGYPT CHS. 29—32**

Ezekiel concluded his oracles against foreign nations with seven messages the Lord gave him concerning the fate of Egypt, one of Israel's most ancient and powerful enemies (cf. Isa. 31:1; Jer. 9:25-26; 25:17, 19; 46:1-26). The seven oracles against Egypt are equal in length to the preceding six oracles against Ammon, Moab, Edom, Philistia, Tyre, and Sidon. Like Jeremiah, Ezekiel showed great interest in Egypt, because of Egypt's significant role in Judean affairs at this time. God controls everything, even the fate of Israel's most notorious antagonist. One of these messages is out of chronological order (29:17—21) and another one appears to be (30:1-19). Since the Lord gave these oracles to Ezekiel over several years, it may be helpful to chart them in relation to other important events in Egypt's history.

The fact of so many prophecies on the same subject should be a reminder to the modern communicator that the truth of a message is conveyed only when the audience actually pays attention to it. Since audiences often change gradually and/or constantly,

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

and people don't always pay attention the first time—or the next time—the communicator may have to repeat the message many times before some people really hear it.<sup>2</sup>

<b>EZEKIEL'S ORACLES AGAINST EGYPT IN THE CONTEXT OF EGYPT'S CHRONOLOGICAL HISTORY</b>		
<b>Event</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Reference</b>
Egypt's domination of Israel	605-609	
Babylonia's defeat of Egypt at Carchemish	605	
Egypt's offers of assistance to Israel against Babylonia	605-586	
The beginning of Nebuchadnezzar's second siege of Jerusalem	588	2 Kings 25:1; Ezek. 24:1-2
Pharaoh Hophra's interruption of the siege of Jerusalem	588	Jer. 37:5-11
EZEKIEL'S FIRST INTRODUCTORY PROPHECY AGAINST EGYPT	587	Ezek. 29:1-16
EZEKIEL'S SECOND PROPHECY DESCRIBING PHARAOH HOPHRA'S INITIAL DEFEAT AND EGYPT'S ULTIMATE DESOLATION	587	Ezek. 30:20-26
EZEKIEL'S THIRD PROPHECY COMPARING EGYPT'S FALL TO ASSYRIA'S COLLAPSE	587	Ezek. 31
The continuing siege of Jerusalem	587	Jer. 32:1-5
The fall of Jerusalem and King Zedekiah's capture	586	2 Kings 25:5-7
The exiles' reception of the news of Jerusalem's fall	585	Ezek. 33:21
EZEKIEL'S FOURTH PROPHECY IN THE FORM OF A FUNERAL DIRGE	585	Ezek. 32:1-16
EZEKIEL'S FIFTH PROPHECY—A SUMMARY LAMENT	585	Ezek. 32:17-32
EZEKIEL'S SIXTH PROPHECY DESCRIBING EGYPT AS NEBUCHADNEZZAR'S SPOIL FOR DEFEATING TYRE	571	Ezek. 29:17-21
EZEKIEL'S SEVENTH PROPHECY ABOUT THE DESTRUCTION OF EGYPT AND HER ALLIES	571	Ezek. 30:1-19

<sup>2</sup> [http://www.preceptaustin.org/ezekiel\\_commentaries1.htm](http://www.preceptaustin.org/ezekiel_commentaries1.htm) Dr. Thomas Constable, Notes on Ezekiel, 2010 Edition,

**Clarke Introduction:** This and the three following chapters foretell the conquest of Egypt by Nebuchadnezzar, which he accomplished in the twenty-seventh year of Jehoiachin's captivity. The same event is foretold by Jeremiah, chap. 46:13, etc. The prophecy opens with God's charging the king of Egypt (Pharaoh-hophra) with the same extravagant pride and profanity which were in the preceding chapter laid to the charge of the prince of Tyre. He appears, like him, to have affected Divine honors; and boasted so much of the strength of his kingdom, that, as an ancient historian (Herodotus) tells us, he impiously declared that God himself could not dispossess him. Wherefore the prophet, with great majesty, addresses him under the image of one of those crocodiles or monsters which inhabited that river, of whose riches and revenue he vaunted; and assures him that, with as much ease as a fisherman drags the fish he has hooked, God would drag him and his people into captivity, and that their carcasses should fall a prey to the beasts of the field and to the fowls of heaven, vv. 1-7. The figure is then dropped; and God is introduced denouncing, in plain terms, the most awful judgments against him and his nation, and declaring that the Egyptians should be subjected to the Babylonians till the fall of the Chaldean empire, vv. 8-12. The prophet then foretells that Egypt, which was about to be devastated by the Babylonians, and many of the people carried into captivity, should again become a kingdom; but that it should never regain its ancient political importance; for, in the lapse of time, it should be even the BASEST of the kingdoms, a circumstance in the prophecy most literally fulfilled, especially under the Christian dispensation, in its government by the Mameluke slaves, vv. 13-16. The prophecy, beginning at the seventeenth verse, is connected with the foregoing, as it relates to the same subject, though delivered about seventeen years later. Nebuchadnezzar and his army, after the long siege of Tyre, which made every head bald by constantly wearing their helmets, and wore the skin off every shoulder by carrying burdens to raise the fortifications, were disappointed of the spoil which they expected, by the retiring of the inhabitants to Carthage. God, therefore, promises him Egypt for his reward, vv. 17-20. The chapter concludes with a prediction of the return of the Jews from the Babylonish captivity, v. 21.<sup>3</sup>

**Wycliffe: Seven Oracles Against Egypt. 29:1–32:32.**

Other maledictions against Egypt occur at Isa 19; Jer 46; Zech 14:18, 19. Egypt's sin was its pride (Ezk 29:3, 9b; 30:10) and its leading Israel away from the Lord (29:6-9a).

Israel's involvements with Egypt at this time are discussed in the Introduction to Ezekiel. Since Egypt was a great world power, ruling nations and aspiring to universal dominion (29:15), the prophet treats of it on a cosmic scale. The judgment of Egypt was to be "the day of the Lord" (30:3). The fall of that great nation would be felt throughout the world (32:10), while even creation would shudder (31:15). The world was to know that God is the Lord (30:19, 26).

The seven oracles describe in various ways God's judgment on Egypt: (1) Pharaoh as a sea-monster or crocodile is to be cast out to be devoured, and the nation is to be restored to lowly status after forty years (29:1-16). (2) Egypt is to be given to Nebuchadnezzar as a recompense for his futile siege of Tyre (29:17-21). (3) Egypt will be overthrown, together with its allies, wealth, princes, and cities (30:1-19). (4) The arms of

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<sup>3</sup> Adam Clarke's Commentary on the Old Testament, Ezekiel

Egypt will be broken by the arms of the king of Babylon (30:20-26). (5) In an allegory, Pharaoh, the mighty cedar, is cut down and enters the underworld in disgrace (31:1-18). (6) A lament over Pharaoh, the crocodile of Egypt, destroyed by the king of Babylon (32:1-16). (7) A dirge sung at the descent of Egypt into the underworld (32:17-32).<sup>4</sup>

### **BKC Introduction: Judgment on Egypt (chaps. 29-32)**

The seventh and final nation Ezekiel prophesied against was Egypt. This prophecy was actually a series of seven oracles directed against Egypt and its Pharaoh. Each oracle is introduced by the clause, “The word of the LORD came to me”; and six of the seven oracles are dated (29:1, 17; 30:1 [undated], 20; 31:1; 32:1, 17). Though 29:1; 30:20; 31:1; 32:1; and 32:17 are in chronological order, 29:17 (the second oracle) is dated later than the others. This departure from his usual chronological arrangement is probably because Ezekiel wanted to arrange the oracles in a logical progression. He possibly placed 29:17-21 where he did to clarify his first prophecy (29:1-16). After predicting that the Pharaoh and Egypt would be destroyed (29:1-16), he then specified who would destroy them (29:17-21).<sup>5</sup>

**McGee Introduction:** Many conservative commentators take the position that the prophecies concerning Egypt are of more interest than the one concerning Tyre. I must confess that I do not concur in that—the prophecies concerning Tyre are remarkable. Also the ones concerning Egypt are interesting, and we will find a remarkable prophecy in this chapter. Egypt was a great nation, and it had not been destroyed. It had maintained its integrity down through the centuries. It was one of the most ancient nations. It did not need to put up a wall of defense. After all, the desert was a pretty good defense. There was only one entrance, and that was through the Nile River valley. All Egypt had to do for protection was put up a good defense there. You will find that the cities of Egypt were not walled—walls were not necessary.

Now God says that the Egyptians will go into captivity for forty years.<sup>6</sup>

**ESV 29:1–32:32:** Oracles against Egypt. The seventh and last of the nations to be addressed, Egypt (like Tyre) receives seven oracles, clarified structurally by the date formula that heads all but one of them (30:1 is the exception). The Egypt oracles equal in bulk the rest of the collection in chs. 25–28. If the chief interest in Tyre was economic, the leading issue for Egypt is military power. As seen in chs. 17 and 19, Egypt was still closely bound up with Judean affairs at this time. The Egyptian king during the period covered by these oracles was Hophra (reigned 589–570 b.c.), named in the OT only in Jer. 44:30. His aspirations over this region were instrumental in fomenting Zedekiah's rebellion against Babylon. This accounts both for the belief that Judeans fleeing Babylonian reprisals would find safety in Egypt (Jeremiah 42–43) and Ezekiel's condemnation of Egypt's opposition to the Babylonians, who wielded the sword of the Lord's wrath.

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<sup>4</sup> Pfeiffer, C. F. (1962). *The Wycliffe Bible commentary : Old Testament* (Eze 29:1). Chicago: Moody Press.

<sup>5</sup> Walvoord, J. F., Zuck, R. B., & Dallas Theological Seminary. (1983-). *The Bible knowledge commentary : An exposition of the scriptures* (Eze 28:25–26). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

<sup>6</sup> McGee, J. V. (1997). *Thru the Bible commentary* (electronic ed.) (Eze 28:26). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

## **Ezekiel 29:1**

**In the tenth year, in the tenth month, in the twelfth day of the month, the word of the LORD came unto me, saying,**

This was about a year and 2 days after Nebuchadnezzar invaded Jerusalem. It was about 7 months before the fall of Jerusalem as recorded in 2 Kings 25:3-8.

**Constable:** This is another dated prophecy. It came to Ezekiel in the year before his first oracle against Tyre (26:1), namely, in 587 B.C. The specific date is January 7, 587 B.C.

**Dake: [tenth year]** This prophecy was given in the tenth year of the captivity (note Ezekiel 8:1), about six months before Jerusalem fell.<sup>7</sup>

**LAN:** There are seven prophecies in Ezekiel 29-32, all dealing with judgment on Egypt. This is probably the first prophecy that was given by Ezekiel in 587 B.C. Hezekiah, Jehoiakim, and Zedekiah (kings of Judah) had all sought help from Egypt despite God's warnings.

There are three key reasons for this prophecy: (1) Egypt was an ancient enemy of the Jews, having once enslaved them for 400 years; (2) Egypt worshiped many gods; (3) Egypt's wealth and power made it seem like a good ally. Egypt offered to help Judah only because of the benefits it hoped to receive from such an alliance. When the Egyptians didn't get what they hoped for, they bailed out of their agreement without regard to any promises they had made.<sup>8</sup>

**Wycliffe: Tenth year, tenth month, twelfth day.** January 586 (or 587) B.C., seven months before the fall of Jerusalem.

**McGee 1-2:** God takes a very definite position against the land of Egypt. It was this nation that had reduced His people to slavery in the brick-yards and had introduced them to idolatry. Egypt had been a thorn in the flesh of Israel for years; yet Israel was constantly running to Egypt for help. For some reason the children of Israel seemed to lean upon Egypt. Now God says He is against Egypt and it will be destroyed.<sup>9</sup>

This oracle is dated "the tenth year, in the tenth month, on the twelfth day," which would be January 7, 587 B.C. This is the first of seven "words" against Egypt (29:17; 30:1, 20; 31:1; 32:1, 17), six of which are dated.

**ESV 1-16:** Against Pharaoh. The two leading charges against Egypt come out clearly in this initial trio of oracles. Verses 1-6a portray the hubris of Egypt putting itself in the place of God, while vv. 6b-9a condemn it for its part in the destruction of Judah. The third section returns to the charge of hubris and subjects Egypt in a more extended way to the retributive hand of God. The date of these prophecies in v. 1, under which these

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<sup>7</sup> Dake Study Notes, Dake's Study Bible

<sup>8</sup> Life Application Notes, Life Application Bible

<sup>9</sup> McGee, J. V. (1997). *Thru the Bible commentary* (electronic ed.) (Eze 29:2). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

oracles are gathered, equates to January 587 b.c., just after Babylon laid siege to Jerusalem, and after Hophra came to power in Egypt. In several prophecies, including this one, God shows Ezekiel what was happening hundreds of miles away (see note on 24:2).

### **Ezekiel 29:2**

**Son of man, set thy face against Pharaoh king of Egypt, and prophesy against him, and against all Egypt:**

This would be Pharaoh-hophre, the grandson of Pharaoh-necho. He was known to the Greeks as Apries, but his Egyptian name was Hophra.

**Constable:** The Lord directed His prophet to turn his attention to the south, to Pharaoh, king of Egypt, and to all of Egypt, and to announce a message of judgment. As often in such prophecies, the king is a metonym (figure of speech) for his nation.

**Clarke: Set thy face against Pharaoh king of Egypt**—This was Pharaoh-hophra or Pharaoh-apries, whom we have so frequently met with in the prophecies of Jeremiah, and much of whose history has been given in the notes.

Egypt had great artistic treasures, a flourishing civilization, and world-renowned military power. Unfortunately, it was also evil, egotistical, idolatrous, and it treated slaves cruelly. For those sins God condemned Egypt. At the battle of Carchemish in 605 B.C., Babylon crushed Egypt along with Assyria, its rivals for the position of world ruler.

**CCE: Pharaoh**—a common name of all the kings of Egypt, meaning “the sun”; or, as others say, a “crocodile,” which was worshipped in parts of Egypt (compare Ez 29:3). Hophra or Apries was on the throne at this time. His reign began prosperously. He took Gaza (Je 47:1) and Zidon and made himself master of Phoenicia and Palestine, recovering much that was lost to Egypt by the victory of Nebuchadnezzar at Carchemish (2Ki 24:7; Je 46:2), in the fourth year of Jehoiakim [WILKINSON, *Ancient Egypt*, 1.169]. So proudly secure because of his successes for twenty-five years did he feel, that he said not even a god could deprive him of his kingdom [HERODOTUS, 2.169]. Hence the appropriateness of the description of him in Ez 29:3. No mere human sagacity could have enabled Ezekiel to foresee Egypt’s downfall in the height of its prosperity. There are four divisions of these prophecies; the first in the tenth year of Ezekiel’s captivity; the last in the twelfth. Between the first and second comes one of much later date, not having been given till the twenty-seventh year (Ez 29:17; 30:19), but placed there as appropriate to the subject matter. Pharaoh-hophra, or Apries, was dethroned and strangled, and Amasis substituted as king, by Nebuchadnezzar (compare Je 44:30). The Egyptian priests, from national vanity, made no mention to HERODOTUS of the Egyptian loss of territory in Syria through Nebuchadnezzar, of which JOSEPHUS tells us, but attributed the change in the succession from Apries to Amasis solely to the Egyptian soldiery. The civil war between the two rivals no doubt lasted several years, affording an opportunity to Nebuchadnezzar of interfering and of elevating the usurper Amasis, on condition of his becoming tributary

to Babylon [WILKINSON]. Compare Je 43:10–12, and see on Je 43:13, for another view of the grounds of interference of Nebuchadnezzar.<sup>10</sup>

**Wycliffe: Pharaoh king of Egypt.** Apries or Hophra, of the Twenty-sixth Dynasty (588–569).

**BKC: The Pharaoh in Egypt** at that time was Hophra who reigned from 589 to 570 B.C. His promises of assistance prompted Judah to break with Babylon. Both Egypt and her leader were singled out for judgment.<sup>11</sup>

The **Pharaoh** was Hophra (c. 589–570 B.C.; see Jer. 44:30). The prophecy against him was also a prophecy against all Egypt (see 30:22; 32:2), like the previous prophecy against Tyre and its king (see 28:1–19). The context suggests that literal, human kings were meant in chs. 28 and 29.

*Egypt* has played a large role in the history of Israel. Its black, fertile soil deposited by the Nile drew Abraham there in order to escape the famine in Palestine (Gen. 12:10). About 200 years later Joseph was sold into slavery in Egypt and was followed there by his family, who also came to escape famine. From these 70 people grew the nation Israel. Solomon married Pharaoh's daughter and enjoyed cordial relations with Egypt; but this was the exception. Shishak of Egypt sacked the Temple in the fifth year of Rehoboam (926 B.C.; 1 Kings 14:25-26). Several kings of Judah sought Egypt's help against Babylon, but in vain (Isa. 36:6). Josiah died in an attempt to stop the Egyptians at Megiddo in 609 (2 Kings 23:29-30). Ironically, the victorious Pharaoh (Neco II) was defeated by Nebuchadnezzar in 605 at Carchemish. After the capture of Jerusalem, some Jews fled to Egypt (Jer. 44). The *Pharaoh* of 29:2 was Hophra (588-569), grandson of Neco, and the king to whom Zedekiah looked for help against Nebuchadnezzar (Jer. 37:5-7; 44:30).

This prophecy came to Ezekiel one year and two days after Nebuchadnezzar had put Jerusalem to siege. The prophecy was going to address the Pharaoh specifically and all of Egypt generally (v.2). The Pharaoh during this time was Pharaoh Neco's grandson, Pharaoh Hophra (Jer. 44:30).

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<sup>10</sup> Jamieson, R., Fausset, A. R., Fausset, A. R., Brown, D., & Brown, D. (1997). *A commentary, critical and explanatory, on the Old and New Testaments* (Eze 29:2). Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.

<sup>11</sup> Walvoord, J. F., Zuck, R. B., & Dallas Theological Seminary. (1983-). *The Bible knowledge commentary : An exposition of the scriptures* (Eze 29:1). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

### **Ezekiel 29:3**

**Speak, and say, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I *am* against thee, Pharaoh king of Egypt, the great dragon that lieth in the midst of his rivers, which hath said, My river *is* mine own, and I have made *it* for myself.**

**Missler:** The dragon or monster here was a phrase for the *crocodile*. It became the identity of their king, “The Old Crocodile of the Nile,” if you will. The crocodile occurred on Egyptian coins in later periods.

It was also one of those creatures that the Egyptians worshiped. They went through all kinds of bizarre episodes in terms of the various things they held sacred. Herodotus, the Greek historian, recounted how the enterprising son of Cyprus the Great of Persia had done his homework and found that the Egyptians regarded dogs and cats as being sacred. So when he was in a military confrontation with them, he placed before his army dogs and cats, and the Egyptians would not attack.

### **Missler Information: The Blessing of the Nile**

The original seat of power had been Upper Egypt; but Pharaohhophra set up his headquarters in Lower Egypt, in the heart of the delta area. He made many improvements there which caused Egypt to prosper in commerce relative to their neighbors. His pride in those accomplishments led to his boast. Pharaoh-hophra was recorded in Scripture, and by Herodotus, as being known for his boasts and arrogant pride. Here he was taking credit for the benefits of the Nile.

That river was something God gave to Egypt, and for the pharaoh to start assuming that he was somehow responsible for it, led to the deification of the leader. The Caesars in Rome became famous along that line also. Pride was one of the reasons God’s wrath would be poured out on Egypt.

**Constable:** Like the king of Tyre and his people, Pharaoh and Egypt had also been guilty of pride. He had become like a great river monster (Heb. *tannim*, probably a crocodile of which there were many in the Nile) because he had taken credit for the Nile River, the lifeblood of the nation. *Tannin*, a variant spelling of *tannim*, is translated "serpent," "leviathan," and "seamaster" (Gen. 1:21; Exod. 7:9-10; Job 9:13; 26:11-13; Ps. 89:10; Isa. 27:1; 51:9; Amos 9:3). It describes real animals as well as mythological monsters in the Old Testament. In ancient Near Eastern mythology this word referred to the monster of chaos destroyed in Creation. Egyptians believed Pharaoh conquered this chaos-monster, but here God called Pharaoh this monster. Rather than giving God thanks for the Nile as a resource, the king had proudly claimed responsibility for it.

This was [Pharaoh] Hophra's ([Gr.] Apries') arrogant selfimage. Herodotus implied that Pharaoh Apries was so strong in his position that he felt no god could dislodge him.<sup>424</sup> In his reign he sent an expedition against Cyprus, besieged and took Gaza (cf. Jer 47:1) and the city of Sidon, was victorious against Tyre by sea, and considered himself master over Palestine and Phoenicia. . . . This arrogance had also shown itself in an attempt to interrupt Babylonia's siege of Jerusalem—an attempt thwarted by God.

**[Pharaoh king of Egypt]** His name was Pharaoh Hophra; called Apries by the Greeks. He besieged Gaza (Jeremiah 47:1), attacked Zidon, and encountered the prince of Tyre on the sea. This was the man Zedekiah relied upon for deliverance from Nebuchadnezzar, but he failed to help him.

**[dragon]** Hebrew: *tanniyn* (HSN-8577), sea serpent, crocodile (note, Exodus 7:9). The crocodile was the proper symbol of Egypt, as found on coins.

**Clarke: The great dragon** *hattannim* should here be translated crocodile, as that is a real animal, and numerous in the Nile; whereas the dragon is wholly fabulous. The original signifies any large animal.

**Clarke: The midst of his rivers**—This refers to the several branches of the Nile, by which this river empties itself into the Mediterranean. The ancients termed them *septem ostia Nili*, “the seven mouths of the Nile.” The crocodile was the emblem of Egypt.

**Wycliffe: The great dragon** (*tannîm*, or *tannîn* in many MSS). Cf. 32:2; Isa 27:1; 51:9. Gunkel and others equate this dragon with the mythological *Tiamat* of the Babylonians. It is, also, often associated with Leviathan (Isa 27:1; Job 41:1; Ps 74:14) and with “Rehab” (Isa 51:9; Job 26:12, 13. Cf. Barton, *Archaeology and the Bible*, 279-302; ANET, 61-68, 137). Here perhaps the dragon is the crocodile, for there are no mythological associations in the present context (cf. A. Heidel, *The Babylonian Genesis*). River, the Nile, *yf.ôr*, is an Egyptian loan-word. The **rivers**, *yf.ôrîm*, are the arms of the Nile in the Delta (cf. vv. 4, 5, 10). “Egypt is the gift of the Nile,” says Herodotus, but Pharaoh boasts, **I have made it** (cf. v. 9. So the Syriac; cf. the LXX).<sup>12</sup>

**BKC:** Ezekiel compared Pharaoh to a great monster in Egypt’s streams. “Monster” (*tannîm*, a variant spelling of *tannîn*) described reptiles, from large snakes (Ex. 7:9-10) to giant sea monsters (Gen. 1:21). It probably included crocodiles. This word was also used in Semitic mythology to describe the chaos-monster who was destroyed when the world was created. Possibly Ezekiel had both ideas in mind. Reptiles in the Nile (especially crocodiles) symbolized Egypt’s strength and ferocity. Egyptians believed that Pharaoh could conquer the chaos-monster; but here, ironically, God called Pharaoh the monster! Pharaoh was considered a god; therefore he thought of himself as having created the Nile (cf. Ezek. 29:9). Pharaoh, however, would soon learn he was no match for the true Creator-God. God said He would drag Egypt away from her place of protection in the Nile and leave her in the desert. This depicts God’s subduing a crocodile (or the mythological “god” who lived in the water) and dragging him to a barren place where he would soon perish. God would defeat Egypt despite her great strength.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Pfeiffer, C. F. (1962). *The Wycliffe Bible commentary : Old Testament*. Chicago: Moody Press.

<sup>13</sup> Walvoord, J. F., Zuck, R. B., & Dallas Theological Seminary. (1983-). *The Bible knowledge commentary : An exposition of the scriptures* (Eze 29:1). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

**McGee:** The crocodile, apparently, is the “great dragon” or sea monster here. Pharaoh is likened unto the crocodile that says, “This is my river.” It is interesting to note that Egypt worshiped all manner of birds, beasts, and bugs. You will notice that the plagues against Egypt (Exod. 7–11) were leveled against the gods which Egypt worshiped. I think that in spite of how terrible the plagues were, they also reveal that God has a sense of humor. Imagine worshipping Heka, the frog-headed goddess, and then waking up one morning and finding frogs all over your bedroom. What are you going to do? Start killing off your goddess? I think the Lord must have smiled at that.

The Pharaoh mentioned here is Pharaoh Hophra, also called Apries in the Greek. He was the grandson of Pharaoh Nechoh, who defeated King Josiah of Judah at Megiddo; in fact, Josiah was slain in that battle. Kings Jehoiakim, Jehoiachin, and Zedekiah all turned to Pharaoh Hophra when Jerusalem was besieged. The Egyptian army came up, went through Phoenicia, and forced the Chaldeans to raise the siege of Jerusalem. The prophet Jeremiah announced the doom of Pharaoh Hophra: “The LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, saith; Behold, I will punish the multitude of No, and Pharaoh, and Egypt, with their gods, and their kings; even Pharaoh, and all them that trust in him: And I will deliver them into the hand of those that seek their lives, and into the hand of Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon, and into the hand of his servants: and afterward it shall be inhabited, as in the days of old, saith the LORD” (Jer. 46:25–26).

You may find it interesting to note that the critic has made an issue of the fact that the prophecy of the destruction of Egypt was not fulfilled at this time. It was fulfilled seventeen years later. However, if you read the prophecy carefully, you will see that, although the prophecy was given through Ezekiel at this time, nothing is said about immediate fulfillment. Egypt was destroyed seventeen years later as God said it would be.

Now notice what God says will happen to Egypt:<sup>14</sup>

### **OTS: Condemnation (29:3b–9a).**

Ezekiel used two brief parables to point out the sins for which Yahweh condemned Egypt. First, Ezekiel compared Pharaoh to a giant crocodile which lay in the midst of the rivers. This monster boasted that the river belonged to him, that he himself had made the river. That was tantamount to a claim to deity. Pharaoh regarded himself as responsible for all the wealth of Egypt. This crocodile, however, was about to be captured. Hooks would be placed in its jaws. The beast would be hauled forth out of its rivers. Its carcass would be cast into the wilderness and left unburied to be consumed by beasts and fowl. The fish clinging to its scales, i.e., Pharaoh’s allies and mercenaries, would suffer the same fate (29:3b–6a).

The judgment on Pharaoh would bring the inhabitants of Egypt to the knowledge that Yahweh is God. That judgment would befall them because they had been nothing but a “staff made of reed” to the house of Israel, i.e., they failed Israel in a time of need. When the Jerusalemites took hold of that staff it broke and pierced their hand. The point is that every time God’s people attempted to lean on Egypt they got hurt. For this reason the Lord would bring against Egypt “a sword,” i.e., a military force, which would cut off

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<sup>14</sup> McGee, J. V. (1997). *Thru the Bible commentary* (electronic ed.) (Eze 29:3). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

both man and beast. The land of Egypt was destined to become a desolation in order that they might know that Yahweh is God (29:6b–9a).<sup>15</sup>

**O great monster:** The Pharaoh is pictured here as a crocodile. My river refers to the Nile. Pharaoh's arrogant pride is described by his words about the Nile River, I have made it for myself (compare with the words of the king of Tyre, 28:2). In the Egyptian religion the crocodile god Sebek was a protector (see 32:2).

**ESV:** The confrontational formula, **Behold, I am against you**, also appears at 28:22, there addressed to Sidon, the last nation to be dealt with before Egypt (see also 26:3). The figure of the **dragon** takes Ezekiel's language to the boundary between the natural and supernatural realms. At one level, this is a symbolic name for the crocodile in the Nile (also 32:2), but at another level it represents a cosmic creature opposed to the rule of God and defeated by him (e.g., Ps. 74:13; Isa. 27:1; 51:9). The claim to be the maker of the Nile amounts to arrogation of divinity (cf. Tyre; Ezek. 28:2).

### **Daniel: 3-5 The Great Monster And The Fish**

Egypt's pharaohs were looked upon as god-kings, who had power over life and death. God addresses this Pharaoh as "the great monster" who claimed to have made the Nile. Like God's pronouncement against the prince of Tyre, who claimed to be a god (Eze. 28:2), the Pharaoh was also going to die.

"The fish of his rivers who would cling to his scales and die with him" either refers to the people of Egypt or the armies.<sup>16</sup>

### **Ezekiel 29:4**

**But I will put hooks in thy jaws, and I will cause the fish of thy rivers to stick unto thy scales, and I will bring thee up out of the midst of thy rivers, and all the fish of thy rivers shall stick unto thy scales.**

**Constable:** The Lord promised to remove Pharaoh and his people from their land, as a fisherman pulls a crocodile out of the water with hooks. He would remove the river-dragon along with the lesser fish that would cling to it. These fish probably refer to the neighbor nations and allies of Egypt that relied on her. Normally people caught crocodiles by placing hooks in their jaws and then dragging them onto land where they killed them. In the delta region of Egypt, the Egyptians worshipped the crocodile as a god, Sebek, which they believed protected their nation (cf. 32:2; Ps. 74:13; Isa. 27:1; 51:9). Thus God promised to destroy Pharaoh, Egypt, and the god supposedly responsible for their protection.

**Clarke:** **I will put hooks in thy jaws**—Amasis, one of this king's generals, being proclaimed king by an insurrection of the people, dethroned Apries, and seized upon the kingdom; and Apries was obliged to flee to Upper Egypt for safety.

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<sup>15</sup> Smith, J. E. (1992). *The Major Prophets* (Eze 29:3–9). Joplin, Mo.: College Press.

<sup>16</sup> Ronald Daniel, <http://www.rondaniel.com/library/26-Ezekiel/Ezekiel2901.pdf>

**Clarke: I will cause the fish—to stick unto thy scales—**Most fish are sorely troubled with a species of insect which bury their heads in their flesh, under their scales, and suck out the vital juices. The allusion seems to be to this. Pharaoh was the crocodile; the fish, the common people; and the sticking to his scales, the insurrection by which he was wasted and despoiled of his kingdom.

**4-5** Whereas v. 3 explains why Pharaoh would be punished, these verses explain how the punishment would be accomplished. The imagery pictures a crocodile being caught, carried out of the water onto land, and left as carrion. The fish represent the Egyptians, who would be judged along with Pharaoh (v. 2 ). Pharaoh's destiny to be food may have been an intentional insult to the rulers famous for their burials and pyramids.

**ESV 4-5: hooks in your jaws.** The judgments against Pharaoh match the metaphorical framework of the accusation ("great dragon ... in the midst of his streams"; v. 3).

**Chuck Smith 4-6:** : Now, Israel leaned upon Egypt for help. It wasn't right that they do so; God wanted them to lean upon Him. In fact, the prophet Jeremiah said, "If you lean upon Egypt, it'll be like a broken reed and it'll pierce your hand." Now a reed is not a strong staff at all. A reed may look strong, but it's very fibrous and it has no strength at all. Though it looks like you could really lean upon it, you go to lean upon a reed and the thing will just bend and you can just pierce through your hand with the thing if you really are leaning hard upon a reed, you're trusting in something that just can't hold you up. It'll bend; it'll break and you'll fall.

Now, Egypt was likened unto a reed upon the people of God leaned. And Pharaoh Haaibre did come up with the Egyptian forces. And he caused Nebuchadnezzar to pull back from his sieging of Jerusalem for a while. But then the Pharaoh Haaibre returned to Egypt and Nebuchadnezzar continued his siege and destroyed Jerusalem. So because Pharaoh Haaibre was not really a help to Judah, God speaks against him. "You have been like a staff of reed to the house of Israel."<sup>17</sup>

### **Ezekiel 29:5**

**And I will leave thee *thrown* into the wilderness, thee and all the fish of thy rivers: thou shalt fall upon the open fields; thou shalt not be brought together, nor gathered: I have given thee for meat to the beasts of the field and to the fowls of the heaven.**

**Constable:** The Lord would carry the dragon into a wilderness along with its dependent fish where they could not return to water. There the beasts and birds would devour Egypt. Hophra (588-569 B.C.) would not receive a royal burial, which was extremely important to the Pharaohs and all the Egyptians. History records that Ahmose II (Gr. Amasis), another Egyptian leader, strangled Hophra and took his place.

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<sup>17</sup> Chuck Smith Sermon Notes, Pastor/founder, Calvary Chapel, Costa Mesa CA

**Clarke: I will leave thee thrown into the wilderness**—Referring to his being obliged to take refuge in Upper Egypt. But he was afterwards taken prisoner, and strangled by Amasis. Herod. lib. 2 s. 169.

**CCE: not be brought together**—As the crocodile is not, when caught, restored to the river, so no remnant of thy routed army shall be brought together, and rallied, after its defeat in the wilderness. Pharaoh led an army against Cyrene in Africa, in support of Aricranes, who had been stripped of his kingdom by the Cyrenians. The army perished and Egypt rebelled against him [JUNIUS]. But the reference is mainly to the defeat by Nebuchadnezzar.<sup>18</sup>

### **Ezekiel 29:6**

**And all the inhabitants of Egypt shall know that I am the LORD, because they have been a staff of reed to the house of Israel.**

**Missler:** There is that phrase again which Ezekiel used so often - ‘and they shall know that I am the Lord.’

A staff of a reed was an unsatisfactory one. You needed a strong staff to lean on. So this was the second accusation. A reed would collapse under your weight. The idiom here implied weakness, disappointment. Israel on several occasions prior, had made alliances with Egypt for their protection, and Egypt either turned on them, or in some cases was just ineffective and ran for cover. So the other accusation laid to their charge was that they failed in the role of being a staff to Israel politically.

**Constable 6-7:** When God did this the Egyptians would know that Yahweh is the only true God. He would also do this because Egypt had been unfaithful to follow through on its promises to help the Israelites. They had proved to be as weak a support as one of the reeds that grew along the banks of the Nile (cf. Exod. 2:3). People used a staff as a cane or walking stick for support when they walked on rough terrain (cf. Zech. 8:4; Mark 6:8; Heb. 11:21). But when the Judahites had relied on the Egyptians this ally had broken and had even injured God's people (cf. 2 Kings 18:21; Isa. 36:6; Jer. 37:7). As a crutch, Egypt was worse than useless. The Israelites, of course, should not have trusted in Egypt, but this did not excuse the Egyptian's for breaking their covenants with Israel.

**Clarke: They have been a staff of reed**—An inefficient and faithless ally. The Israelites expected assistance from them when Nebuchadnezzar came against Jerusalem; and they made a feint to help them, but retired when Nebuchadnezzar went against them. Thus were the Jews deceived and ultimately ruined, see verse 7.

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<sup>18</sup> Jamieson, R., Fausset, A. R., Fausset, A. R., Brown, D., & Brown, D. (1997). *A commentary, critical and explanatory, on the Old and New Testaments* (Eze 29:5). Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.

**Dake: [because thy have been a staff of reed to the house of Israel]** Six causes for the destruction of Egypt:

1. Because they have been a staff or reed to the house of Israel; that is, because Judah trusted in them instead of Jehovah (Ezekiel 29:6,16).
2. Because of betraying Judah when they did trust in Egypt (Ezekiel 29:7).
3. Because Pharaoh said, The river is mine, and I have made it (Ezekiel 29:9).
4. To be a spoil for Nebuchadnezzar, for his service to God in punishing Tyre, Judah and others (Ezekiel 29:19-20).
5. Because of pride (Ezekiel 30:6; Ezekiel 31:10).
6. Because of idolatry (Ezekiel 30:13).

**BKC 6-9:** The second section of this prophecy deals with Egypt's basic sin: she had been a staff of reeds for the house of Israel. A "staff" was used as a cane or walking stick for support on the rough terrain in Israel (cf. Zech. 8:4; Mark 6:8; Heb. 11:21). Israel leaned on Egypt for support in her revolt against Babylon, but Egypt's support was as fragile as the reeds which grew abundantly on the Nile River's shores. When the pressure came, the reed snapped, and Israel found herself unable to stand. Possibly Ezekiel was quoting a proverb commonly applied to Egypt which had a reputation as an unreliable ally (cf. 2 Kings 18:20-21).

The time of this prophecy probably coincided with Egypt's halfhearted attempt to aid Jerusalem during Nebuchadnezzar's siege (cf. Jer. 37:4-8). Egypt backed out and Jerusalem suffered the consequences. Jerusalem learned too late that a slender reed could not give support. When she leaned on Egypt for deliverance from Babylon, Egypt let her down (like a reed, she splintered and broke).

Because of Egypt's false promises of support to Judah, God said He would punish the Egyptians by the sword and Egypt would become a desolate wasteland.<sup>19</sup>

**6-7** God's purpose for judging Egypt was to encourage the nations and individuals to come to know Him (see 6:14; 7:27; 12:20; 14:11; 22:16; 23:49; 25:7, 11, 17; 28:24). Staff of reed refers to the people of Egypt. This alludes to Egypt's weakness as an ally and the worthlessness of that country's protection (see Isa. 36:6). Israel was foolish to rely on Egypt for protection. They should have turned to God for their security and strength.

**ESV 6b-9a:** The second accusation is cast in the familiar because ... therefore (Hb. *ya'an ... laken*) form seen often in Ezekiel. A river-related metaphor is again used; this time, however, Egypt is the staff of reed (i.e., a useless staff made from a flimsy reed) that treacherously fails to give support. In all likelihood this metaphor relates to the events narrated in Jer. 37:5-11 and echoes the taunt hurled against Hezekiah's Jerusalem by the Assyrians (2 Kings 18:21).

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<sup>19</sup> Walvoord, J. F., Zuck, R. B., & Dallas Theological Seminary. (1983-). *The Bible knowledge commentary : An exposition of the scriptures* (Eze 29:6). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

**Daniel: 6-7 A Staff Made Of Reed** The reason God is going to judge Pharaoh and all Egypt is because "they have been only a staff made of reed" to Israel. A staff is something you lean on, that helps you walk as you go on your way. It should be made of wood, giving you stability as you walk.

You would never want to use a reed as a staff, for it would break when weight was put on it, and would cut your hand. When did the Jews rely upon Egypt, described as a staff made of reed? Several years after the Assyrians carried the northern kingdom of Israel into captivity, they moved down into the southern kingdom of Judah.

Messengers from the king of Assyria came to Jerusalem and said,

**2Kings 18:19-21** ... *"Say now to Hezekiah, 'Thus says the great king, the king of Assyria, 'What is this confidence that you have? You say (but they are only empty words), 'I have counsel and strength for the war.' Now on whom do you rely, that you have rebelled against me? Now behold, you rely on the staff of this crushed reed, even on Egypt; on which if a man leans, it will go into his hand and pierce it. So is Pharaoh king of Egypt to all who rely on him.'"*

Hezekiah had been relying upon Egypt, but it was the Lord who delivered Jerusalem that day (2Kings 19:35).

About a hundred years later, when the enemy was the Babylonians, Judah again tried to turn to Egypt for help. As we have covered a number of times in our study of the book of Ezekiel, Babylon had carried into captivity many of the Jews, and Nebuchadnezzar had appointed Zedekiah as king of Judah (2Ki. 24:17). God had warned Zedekiah to serve Nebuchadnezzar (Jer. 27:6-13), but instead, Zedekiah had rebelled against Nebuchadnezzar (2Chron. 36:13) and had turned to Egypt as an ally against Babylon.

When Jerusalem was put to siege by the Babylonians, Zedekiah fully expected Egypt to deliver Judah. Egypt did in fact send some help (Jer. 37:5), but quickly bailed out and went back home when the Babylonian army came after them (Jer. 37:7). Egypt had once again proven itself to be a staff made of reed.

### **Ezekiel 29:7**

**When they took hold of thee by thy hand, thou didst break, and rend all their shoulder: and when they leaned upon thee, thou brakest, and madest all their loins to be at a stand.**

### **Ezekiel 29:8**

**Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I will bring a sword upon thee, and cut off man and beast out of thee.**

**Constable:** As punishment, Yahweh would bring war into Egypt that would slay man and beast. Egypt would become desolate and waste, and people would learn that the Lord is God.

**sword:** Here is another reference to the Babylonian army under Nebuchadnezzar, the predicted human instrument of God's coming wrath (see 21:1-7, 9-11, 19, 20; 26:7-14).

**Daniel 8-12 A Desolation And Waste** For failing to support the Jews, the land of Egypt will suffer. It will become a desolation and a waste. Once again, God would use Nebuchadnezzar as His instrument of judgment. When Babylon's army conquered Egypt, the Egyptians would be scattered for forty years, being dispersed throughout the other nearby nations.

**Ezekiel 29:9**

**And the land of Egypt shall be desolate and waste; and they shall know that I *am* the LORD: because he hath said, The river *is* mine, and I have made *it*.**

**Constable 9-10:** The Lord repeated that He would devastate Egypt for her pride and self-sufficiency. The whole land would suffer destruction, from Migdol, in the northeast delta, to Syene, in the south near modern Aswan, and to the very border of Ethiopia, at the extreme southern end of the land.<sup>428</sup> Ancient Ethiopia (Cush, Nubia) corresponds to modern southern Egypt, Sudan, Eritrea, and northern Ethiopia.

**LAN 9-10:** The Nile was Egypt's pride and joy, a life-giving river cutting through the middle of the desert. Rather than thanking God, however, Egypt declared, "The Nile is mine; I made it." We do the same when we say "This house is mine; I built it," or "I have brought myself to the place where I am today," or "I have built this church, business, or reputation, from the ground up." These statements reveal our pride. Sometimes we take for granted what God has given us, thinking we have made it ourselves. Of course, we have put forth a lot of hard effort, but God supplied the resources, gave us the abilities, and provided us with the opportunities to make it happen. Instead of claiming our own greatness, as the Egyptians did, we should proclaim God's greatness and give him the credit. (Migdol is in the north of Egypt, and Aswan in the south. Thus, this meant all of Egypt.)

**OTS: Desolation (29:9b–12).**

Pharaoh's pride which boasted of deity necessitated the punishment which God had decreed. God was hostile to Pharaoh and the rivers which he claimed to have created. The land would become a "desolation and waste" from one border to the other. For forty years the cities of Egypt would be abandoned. Egyptians would be scattered among the nations. Thus far the Egyptian records, which are very skimpy in this period, do not provide documentation for such a time in Egyptian history.<sup>20</sup>

The nation was indicted as a result of what he—that is, Pharaoh—boasted. Often national monuments were inscribed in ancient times with the exaggerated and arrogant boasts of kings.

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<sup>20</sup> Smith, J. E. (1992). *The Major Prophets* (Eze 29:9–12). Joplin, Mo.: College Press.

**ESV 9b–16:** A brief **because** section (v. 9b) repeats the accusation against Egypt in v. 3 before a much longer and literal judgment speech (vv. 10–16). The judgment has typical elements in vv. 10–12 that coincide with those leveled against Israel and Judah themselves. That Egypt should also be favored with restoration (vv. 13–16) is more surprising, but not unparalleled (see Jer. 46:26; cf. Jer. 48:47; 49:6, 39). Restored Egypt will, however, be cured of its hubris (Ezek. 29:14–15). Isaiah describes a future even farther off, with the Egyptians brought to knowing the true God (Isa. 19:18–25).

### **Ezekiel 29:10**

**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.**

These were geographical extremes in the land.

**From the tower of Syene**  $\hat{=}$  *mimmigdol seveneh*, “from Migdol to Syene.” Syene, now called Essuan, was the last city in Egypt, going towards Ethiopia. It was famous for a well into which the rays of the sun fell perpendicularly at midday.

**CCE: from the tower of Syene**—GROTIUS translates, “from Migdol (a fortress near Pelusium on the north of Suez) to Syene (in the farthest south)”; that is, from one end of Egypt to the other. So “from Migdol to Syene,” Ez 30:6, *Margin*. However, *English Version* rightly refers Syene to Seveneh, that is, Sebennytus, in the eastern delta of the Nile, the capital of the Lower Egyptian kings. The Sebennyte Pharaohs, with the help of the Canaanites, who, as shepherds or merchants, ranged the desert of Suez, extended their borders beyond the narrow province east of the delta, to which they had been confined by the Pharaohs of Upper Egypt. The defeated party, in derision, named the Sebennyte or Lower Egyptians *foreigners* and *shepherd-kings* (a shepherd being an abomination in Egypt, Ge 46:34). They were really a *native* dynasty. Thus, in *English Version*, “Ethiopia” in the extreme south is rightly contrasted with Sebennytus or Syene in the north.<sup>21</sup>

**BKC 10-16:** This portion of Ezekiel’s prophecy discusses the extent of God’s judgment on Egypt. The desolation would extend from Migdol to Aswan, as far as the border of Cush. “Migdol” was in the Delta region in northern (lower) Egypt and “Aswan” (or “Syene”) was at the first cataract in southern (upper) Egypt and was the southern boundary between Egypt and Cush. Cush corresponds to present-day southern Egypt, Sudan, and northern Ethiopia.

God’s total devastation of Egypt would last for 40 years. Judah had been destroyed because she relied on Egypt; Egypt would suffer the same fate. God would disperse Egypt among the nations; she would also be carried into captivity.

No archeological finding has yet confirmed an Egyptian deportation similar to the one experienced by Israel. However, it is unwise to dismiss a clear statement of Scripture on

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<sup>21</sup> Jamieson, R., Fausset, A. R., Fausset, A. R., Brown, D., & Brown, D. (1997). *A commentary, critical and explanatory, on the Old and New Testaments* (Eze 29:10). Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.

the basis of incomplete archeological data. Nebuchadnezzar did attack Egypt (29:17-21; cf. Jer. 43:8-13; 46:1-25). Assuming that he conquered the country, one would expect him to deport people to Babylon as he did others he conquered. Presumably, then, the Egyptian captives would have been allowed to return home in the reign of Cyrus of Persia, who defeated Babylon in 539 B.C. (ca. 33 years after Nebuchadnezzar's attack). Allowing seven additional years for the people to return and rebuild, a 40-year period of desolation was entirely possible.

God would then take the Egyptians back ... to Pathros, the land of their ancestry. "Pathros" (cf. 30:14) was a geographic region located in southern (upper) Egypt. Some feel that this was the traditional birthplace of the nation of Egypt. Perhaps "Pathros" was used here to represent the entire land of Egypt.

Though God would let the Egyptians return to their land, Egypt would not achieve the place of power she once held. Instead she would be the lowliest of kingdoms. After Persia's rise to power, Egypt never again in biblical times became a major international power. She tried to exert herself during the intertestamental period, but she was held in check by Greece, Syria, and Rome. Egypt's political weakness would be a continual object lesson to Israel. She would look at Egypt and remember her folly of depending on men instead of God.<sup>22</sup>

Egypt was to be desolate from the Nile Delta to the southern border.

**Migdol to Syene** refers to places most likely near the northern and southern boundaries of ancient Egypt, indicating the totality of the land (see Judg. 20:1). The desolation would extend to the land south of Egypt—ancient Nubia which is modern Sudan.

**ESV 10–11:** The desolation of Egypt, which lasts forty years, strikes at the assumption that the annual inundations of the Nile that supported Egypt guaranteed its perpetual well-being. The location of Migdol is unknown, but together with Syene (Aswan) it bounds Egypt north and south. Cush is the region roughly corresponding to modern Ethiopia. Most interpreters think this "forty years" does not refer to any specific period of time but is a symbolic number showing the parallel to the wandering of Israel in the wilderness for 40 years, or just symbolizing the completeness of God's judgment. Some interpreters have taken it to refer to the period when Egypt was under Babylonian rule from 568 to 525 b.c. (see note on v. 19).

**Chuck Smith 10-18:** Now, there are those Bible critics who say, "Well, this did not happen during the time of Pharaoh Haaibre, that Nebuchadnezzar did not conquer Egypt during the time of his reign." It is interesting that they have skipped this particular reference in verse 17. He doesn't say that Nebuchadnezzar conquered the Pharaoh Haaibre and conquered Egypt during the time of his reign. But this came in the twenty-seventh year; the previous prophecy came in the tenth year. So the latter part of this chapter came seventeen years later, after the death of Pharaoh Haaibre.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Walvoord, J. F., Zuck, R. B., & Dallas Theological Seminary. (1983-). *The Bible knowledge commentary : An exposition of the scriptures* (Eze 29:10–16). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

<sup>23</sup> Chuck Smith Sermon Notes, Pastor/founder, Calvary Chapel, Costa Mesa CA

### **Ezekiel 29:11**

**No foot of man shall pass through it, nor foot of beast shall pass through it, neither shall it be inhabited forty years.**

**Missler:** There were forty years of desolation predicted by Ezekiel upon Egypt. This immediately suggests to us the forty years that Israel wandered in the wilderness subsequent to the exodus. But from Nebuchadnezzar's conquest of Pharaoh-Necho through the victory of Cyrus, Babylon ruled over Egypt in some sense or another for a forty year period. Nebuchadnezzar took great numbers of captives of the Egyptians, as recorded in the Babylonian records.

**Constable 11-12:** Egypt would not be inhabited for 40 years, and other desolated lands would surround her. Her cities would lie waste, and her people would disperse among other nations and live in other countries. Egypt's fate was like a repetition of Israel's in the wilderness (cf. 4:6). Egypt did indeed fall to the Babylonians in 568-567 B.C.

The Egyptians would experience a scattering to other lands for forty years (see 4:4–8). A Babylonian chronicle suggests that Egypt was conquered around 568 B.C. Forty years after this date, the Persians instituted a policy of resettlement for many of the peoples who had been dispersed by Babylon.

### **Ezekiel 29:12**

**And I will make the land of Egypt desolate in the midst of the countries *that are* desolate, and her cities among the 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.**

**Dake:** [forty years] These 40 years are to be understood literally (Ezekiel 29:11-14). They were to be a part of the 70-year period when Israel would be in Babylonian captivity. Nebuchadnezzar did not conquer the Egyptians until a number of years after the fall of Jerusalem; so from the end of the war with them and the time it took to cause the desolations he made in Egypt, to the completion of the 70 years of Israel's captivity, was about 40 years. The invasion of Egypt of Ezekiel 29:17 began about 16 years after the fall of Jerusalem, or 27 years after the first captivity of Judah (note <sup>a</sup>, <sup>□</sup> Ezekiel 8:1). No doubt Cyrus gave the Egyptians permission to return to their own land when he allowed Israel to go back to the promised land (Ezra 1:1-4).

**Clarke:** **Shall be desolate forty years**—The country from Migdol or Magdolan, which was on the isthmus between the Mediterranean and the Red Sea, was so completely ruined, that it might well be called desert; and it is probable that this desolation continued during the whole of the reign of Amasis, which was just forty years. See Herod. lib. 3 c. 10; and see Calmet.

### **Ezekiel 29:13**

**Yet thus saith the Lord GOD; At the end of forty years will I gather the Egyptians from the people whither they were scattered:**

**Constable 13-14:** At the end of 40 years, the Lord promised to gather the Egyptians back to their original land, the land of Pathros, Upper (southern) Egypt, from the countries where they had fled (cf. Isa. 11:11). There the Egyptians would become a lowly kingdom in contrast to the great kingdom that they had been in former centuries (cf. Dan. 11:36-45). Forty years after Egypt fell to the Babylonians, the Persians, who had by that time defeated the Babylonians, allowed the Egyptians to return to their homeland. This was the foreign policy of the Persians under which the Israelites were also able to return to their land. No extrabiblical evidence has yet come to light to substantiate this forty-year captivity of Egypt, but that is not unusual since it was rare for ancient Near Eastern rulers to admit defeats much less document them for future generations. Chisholm suggested that the prophecy may not have been fulfilled as prophesied here because the Egyptians repented.<sup>429</sup> We have no evidence of such repentance, but it could have happened.

**Clarke: Will I gather the Egyptians**—It is probable that Cyrus gave permission to the Egyptians brought to Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar, to return to their own country. And if we reckon from the commencement of the war against Pharaoh-hophra by Nebuchadnezzar, to the third or fourth year of Cyrus, the term will be about forty years.

Seventeen years later, to be exact, the king of Babylon, Nebuchadnezzar, came and took the Egyptians into captivity. They were in captivity for forty years, not seventy years like Israel.

#### **OTS: Restoration (29:13–16).**

At the end of forty years the Lord would gather the scattered Egyptians. They would return to Pathros, i.e., southern Egypt, the region of their origin. Restored Egypt, however, would only be a shadow of the once mighty empire of the Pharaohs. Never again would Egypt lift itself over other nations. Never again would the Israelites repeat their past iniquity by putting their confidence in Egypt.<sup>24</sup>

**Daniel 13-16 Egypt's Future** God says that Egypt would not be done forever. However, even though they would be regathered, they would never be restored to the level which they had attained previously as a world power. They would always be a "lowly kingdom."

This was one way God would insure that Israel would never again turn to them for help as an ally. It would never again be "the confidence of Israel."

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<sup>24</sup> Smith, J. E. (1992). *The Major Prophets* (Eze 29:13–16). Joplin, Mo.: College Press.

### **Ezekiel 29:14**

**And I will bring again the captivity of Egypt, and will cause them to return *into* the land of Pathros, into the land of their habitation; and they shall be there a base kingdom.**

**Clarke: Into the land of Pathros**—Supposed to mean the Delta, a country included between the branches of the Nile, called *Ä delta*, from its being in the form of the Greek letter of that name. It may mean the Pathrusim, in Upper Egypt, near to the Thebaid. This is most likely.

**Clarke: Shall be there a base kingdom**—That is, it shall continue to be tributary. It is upwards of two thousand years since this prophecy was delivered, and it has been uninterruptedly fulfilling to the present hour.

1. Egypt became tributary to the Babylonians under Amasis.
2. After the ruin of the Babylonish empire, it became subject to the Persians.
3. After the Persians, it came into the hands of the Macedonians.
4. After the Macedonians it fell into the hands of the Romans.
5. After the division of the Roman empire it was subdued by the Saracens.
6. About A.D. 1250, it came into the hands of the Mameluke slaves.
7. Selim, the ninth emperor of the Turks, conquered the Mamelukes, A.D. 1517, and annexed Egypt to the Ottoman empire, of which it still continues to be a province, governed by a pacha and twenty-four beys, who are always advanced from servitude to the administration of public affairs. So true is it that Egypt, once so glorious, is the basest of kingdoms. See Newton on the prophecies.

The “land of Pathros” refers to upper Egypt.

14-15 The land of Pathros is southern Egypt. This kingdom would thereafter be lowly and the lowliest, never again to dominate other nations.

**ESV:** Ancient Egyptian tradition located its national origins in the region of the Upper Nile where Pathros is located. The reference suggests that Ezekiel was well informed of Egyptian lore. Jewish mercenaries had been in the region for many years. Judean refugees fled there with Jeremiah (Jer. 44:15).

### **Ezekiel 29:15**

**It shall be the basest of the kingdoms; neither shall it exalt itself any more above the nations: for I will diminish them, that they shall no more rule over the nations.**

**Missler:** This is a fascinating comment by Ezekiel, because after this period, from Pharaoh-Necho on, they declined. After Babylon came the Persians, and while indeed they were allowed to return to their land under Cyrus, the Persians dominated the situation. Then came Alexander the Great. Then came the breaking up under his four generals, and of the four generals, Ptolemy took over Egypt.

After the Greeks came the Romans, and throughout history for centuries, Egypt has continued to decline. Even to this day we have Egypt in something less than a dominate role even in some kind of local sense. It is interesting that for 2500 years the prophecies of Ezekiel are fulfilled in that it has never emerged again as a nation over others.

**Constable 15-16:** Egypt would be the lowest of the kingdoms and would never again be a superpower in the world. The Egyptians would not even rule over other nations. Egypt would then be no temptation for Israel to rely on. Her lowly state would remind the Israelites of their folly in trusting in Egypt earlier. Then all would know that the Lord is God.

**Dake:** [It shall be the basest of the kingdoms; neither shall it exalt itself any more above the nations: for I will diminish them, that they shall no more rule over the nations] The prediction here is that after the restoration of Egypt as a kingdom it would remain forever as the basest of kingdoms, never to have domination over nations as in times past. In the fulfillment of this it has been under Babylon, Persia, Greece, Rome, and other conquerors; only recently has it gained independence from Britain. Egypt will become only one of ten kingdoms yet to be formed inside the old Roman Empire territory (Daniel 7:23-24). Syria will conquer Egypt after that and it will then be subject to Antichrist (from Syria) for the last three and a half years of this age. At the second coming it will be a kingdom along with Israel and other nations under the rule of Jesus Christ (Isaiah 19:19-23, notes).

**McGee:** Egypt had been the great power of the ancient world. They came out of the dawn of history as a great nation. Their monuments and tombs reveal the fact that they had a civilization that was second to none. It is believed today by many historians that the Greeks got a great deal of their information from the Egyptians. Egypt was a great nation, but God said, “I am going to let Nebuchadnezzar take you. Not only that, you are going to be in captivity for forty years, and at the end of that time you are going to return to your land, but you are going to be a base kingdom—in fact, the basest of the kingdoms.” My friend, on our tours we visit many lands in the Near East, and we can see how accurate God’s prediction was. No one can go to Cairo without his heart being sick when he sees the poverty and the low levels to which the people have sunk.<sup>25</sup>

**they will never again rule over the nations.** Egypt never rebuilt the empire it once had.

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<sup>25</sup> McGee, J. V. (1997). *Thru the Bible commentary* (electronic ed.) (Eze 29:15). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

### **Ezekiel 29:16**

**And it shall be no more the confidence of the house of Israel, which bringeth *their* iniquity to remembrance, when they shall look after them: but they shall know that *I am* the Lord GOD.**

**Dake:** [And it shall be no more the confidence of the house of Israel] Not only has Egypt become a base kingdom as predicted, but Israel has never again trusted in Egypt, the friendship even turning into bitter enmity.

**LAN 13-16:** This 40-year period of desolation in Egypt is hard to pinpoint. Nebuchadnezzar attacked Egypt around 572 B.C. and carried many people off to Babylon, while others fled for safety to surrounding nations. Approximately 33 years later, Cyrus, king of the Persian empire, conquered Babylon and allowed the nations which Babylon had conquered to return to their homelands. Adding a possible seven-year regrouping and travel period, this could then make up that 40-year time period. Since that time, Egypt has never returned to its previous dominance as a world power. Upper Egypt was the region south of the Nile delta.

### **Ezekiel 29:17**

**And it came to pass in the seven and twentieth year, in the first *month*, in the first *day* of the month, the word of the LORD came unto me, saying,**

**Missler:** This was actually 17 years later at the approximate end of the 13<sup>th</sup> year siege on Tyre by Nebuchadnezzar that we talked about earlier. Historians are not sure what ever became of it all, but the citizens of Tyre moved all their wealth offshore and the net of the campaign was that when they conquered the city, there wasn't anything left to pay his army with. That was the name of the game—you took a place and took spoil to pay the army with.

When they found Tyre worthless, they went south to pick up spoils in Egypt. They were therefore unknowingly fulfilling prophecy, both against Tyre, and Nebuchadnezzar would be the instrument God would use against Egypt as well.

### **Constable; The consummation of Egypt's judgment 29:17-21**

Ezekiel received another message from the Lord about Egypt's judgment on April 26, 571 B.C. (on his New Year's day).<sup>430</sup> This was probably the second to the last recorded prophecy of Ezekiel, and the prophet would have been about 50 years old at this time (cf. 1:1-2). The writer evidently inserted this oracle in the text here to group it with the other prophecies against Egypt. Its placement here informs the reader that the destruction of Egypt foretold in the first message would come through Nebuchadnezzar. This enables us to understand better the remaining oracles against Egypt.

**[seven and twentieth year]** The 27th year of the captivity of Judah, about 3 years before the 40 years of Ezekiel 29:11-14 began. It no doubt took Nebuchadnezzar at least this long to conquer and ravage all the land of Egypt.

**Clarke: The seven and twentieth year**—That is, of the captivity of Jeconiah, fifteen years after the taking of Jerusalem; about April 20, 3432. The preceding prophecy was delivered one year before the taking of Jerusalem; this, sixteen years after; and it is supposed to be the last which this prophet wrote.

**LAN 17-18:** This prophecy was given in 571 B.C. and is actually the latest prophecy in Ezekiel. Nebuchadnezzar had finally conquered Tyre after a long and costly 15-year siege (586-571 B.C.). He had not counted on such an expense, so he went south and conquered Egypt to make up for all he had lost in taking Tyre. Ezekiel placed this prophecy here to describe *who* would bring this punishment to Egypt. God was using Nebuchadnezzar, an evil man, as an instrument of his judgment on Tyre, Judah, and Egypt—evil nations themselves. When Babylon didn't recognize God's favor, he judged it too.

**Wycliffe: Twenty-seventh year, first month, first day.** March–April 570 (571) B.C. The latest prophecy of Ezekiel. Nebuchadnezzar invaded Egypt in the thirty-seventh year of his reign, 568/567 B.C., but Egypt did not become a part of his empire. 18. In the arduous siege laid to Tyre by Nebuchadnezzar's army (585–573), every head was made bald by carrying loads, and every shoulder was rubbed bare (RSV) by the chafing of the weights.<sup>26</sup>

#### THE DEFEAT OF EGYPT BY BABYLON (29:17-21)

**BKC 17-21:** Ezekiel's second prophecy against Egypt came in the 27th year, in the first month on the first day. This is the latest dated prophecy in the Book of Ezekiel. The date was April 26, 571 B.C. As stated earlier, Ezekiel probably placed this prophecy out of chronological order to draw attention to his logical progression. He had just described Egypt's coming judgment (vv. 1-16); he placed verses 17-21 afterward to indicate who would bring the judgment. Nebuchadnezzar himself would attack Egypt.

This prophecy was written shortly after Tyre's surrender to Babylon in 572 B.C. For 13 years Nebuchadnezzar had besieged the city of Tyre (585-572 B.C.). The picture of heads rubbed bare because of the prolonged wearing of helmets and of shoulders that were raw from carrying wood and stone for building siege mounds is graphic. Nebuchadnezzar had worked hard for meager results. Yet he ... got no reward from that campaign ... against Tyre. Tyre surrendered to Nebuchadnezzar, but there were no vast spoils of war to distribute as booty to his army. Evidently Tyre shipped off her wealth before she surrendered.

Nebuchadnezzar needed money to pay his soldiers for their labor so he turned to Egypt. Prompted by economic necessity, Babylon attacked Egypt and plundered its wealth to pay ... his army. Yet it was really God who was "paying" Babylon to attack Egypt: I have given him Egypt as a reward for his efforts.

Ezekiel's second prophecy against Egypt ended with a promise to Israel. That day is interpreted in various ways. Some see a reference to a still future day of the Lord when God will restore Israel to her land and judge the nations around her. However, such a

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<sup>26</sup> Pfeiffer, C. F. (1962). *The Wycliffe Bible commentary : Old Testament* (Eze 29:17). Chicago: Moody Press.

jump seems foreign to the text. The “day” in question was probably the time when God would judge Egypt through Babylon and then restore Egypt to her land.

When God finally restored the nations of Israel and Egypt, He would make a horn grow for ... Israel. A horn symbolized strength (cf. 1 Sam. 2:1; 2 Sam. 22:3; 1 Kings 22:11; Jer. 48:25) and was applied in an ultimate sense to the strength of the Messiah, Christ, who would deliver Israel (cf. Luke 1:69). However, here the “horn” probably refers to Israel’s strength which Nebuchadnezzar had destroyed. When Egypt was restored, Israel would also be restored as a nation.

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. Ezek. 3:26) for two reasons: (1) Ezekiel’s dumbness had already ended in the 12th year of Jehoiachin’s exile (33:21-22), and this prophecy came in the 27th year (29:17). (2) This prophecy would take place after Israel was restored from captivity. Ezekiel was 30 years old in 592 B.C. (1:1-2), so he would have been 83 when Cyrus’ edict to let Israel return to her land was issued. Perhaps an 83-year-old might not have survived such an arduous journey from Babylon to Israel. None of the postexilic records refer to Ezekiel returning to Israel. The best explanation is that Ezekiel’s spoken prophecies which had perplexed the people would become clear when they were fulfilled. Israel would recognize God’s character as He faithfully accomplished His promise.<sup>27</sup>

#### **OTS: The Prize of Egypt (29:17–21).**

For thirteen years Nebuchadnezzar had besieged the island fortress of Tyre. Every soldier’s head was made bald by ill-fitted helmets. Every shoulder was raw from carrying heavy timber and stone. Yet in spite of years of effort, Nebuchadnezzar and his army had not adequately been rewarded with the spoils of war. Because he did the bidding of the Lord at Tyre, Nebuchadnezzar would be rewarded. He would be given all the wealth of Egypt to use as wages for his army (29:17–20). Though Egypt would be humiliated, the Lord would make a “horn sprout for the house of Israel,” i.e., he would begin the process of restoring the power of Israel. In the day Nebuchadnezzar invaded Egypt the Lord would open Ezekiel’s mouth.<sup>3</sup> This seems to mean that the skepticism of the captives regarding Ezekiel would be removed and they would come to regard him as a true prophet. He would therefore be able to speak freely to them (29:21).<sup>28</sup>

The “twenty-seventh year, in the first month, on the first day” is April 26, 571 B.C. Chronologically, this is the latest prophecy of all those dated oracles which Ezekiel includes in his book.

**came to pass:** Ezekiel received this oracle from God (vv. 17–21) and apparently the following message also (30:1–19) in March-April 571 B.C., the latest date in the book (see v. 1).

**ESV 17–21:** Nebuchadnezzar and Egypt. This is the latest-dated oracle in the book, coming in April 571 b.c. Nebuchadnezzar's siege of Tyre had ended with Tyre intact,

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<sup>27</sup> Walvoord, J. F., Zuck, R. B., & Dallas Theological Seminary. (1983-). *The Bible knowledge commentary : An exposition of the scriptures* (Eze 29:10–21). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

<sup>28</sup> Smith, J. E. (1992). *The Major Prophets* (Eze 29:17–21). Joplin, Mo.: College Press.

albeit subject to the Babylonians, who had little to show for 13 years of effort. (On this episode, see note on 26:1–28:19.) The concluding remark in 29:20 that they worked for me (i.e., Babylon was doing the Lord's work in besieging Tyre), emphasizes the point of view running through Ezekiel's foreign-nation oracles: opposition to Nebuchadnezzar's Babylon was opposition against the agents of God's wrath. Thus the **labor** they expended (v. 18) was to be rewarded with wages (v. 19) provided by God, but now coming from **Egypt** (v. 20).

**Danile 17-20 Egypt Given To Babylon** In our previous study, we read of God's prophetic words of judgment against Tyre (Eze. 26-28). Remember that while Nebuchadnezzar was besieging the city, the Tyrians essentially relocated the entire city to an island a half offshore. Needless to say, by the time Nebuchadnezzar got into Tyre after the 13-year siege, there wasn't much left.

God tells Ezekiel that because of this, God was going to give Egypt's wealth to Babylon. After all, they had been doing God's work in judging Tyre, and the Lord says, Matt. 10:10 "...the worker is worthy of his support."

### **Ezekiel 29:18**

**Son of man, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon caused his army to serve a great service against Tyrus: every head *was* made bald, and every shoulder *was* peeled: yet had he no wages, nor his army, for Tyrus, for the service that he had served against it:**

Nebuchadnezzar - do not be confused by the Babylonian articulation of Nebuchadnezzar's name verses the more common one we see in the Bible.

**Constable:** The Lord revealed to Ezekiel that Nebuchadnezzar, as Yahweh's instrument of judgment, had worked hard at defeating Tyre. "Every head was made bald, and every shoulder was rubbed bare" describes the chafing of helmets and the carrying of burdens for the siege-works. The siege of Tyre took 13 years (ca. 586-573 B.C.). However, Nebuchadnezzar received little compensation for his labor; the spoil he took was hardly worth all the time and effort he expended.

In ancient times armies were not paid as they are today. Soldiers might receive a small allowance along with their rations, but it would have been foolish to join an army just for the pittance paid as wage. Instead, a special incentive system made army life attractive and often exciting. Soldiers successful in battle were allowed to take and keep anything they could lay hands on and carry away. Many battles took place at or near large cities or in prosperous lands where wealth was concentrated. Indeed, ancient wars of conquest were launched precisely so that the conquerors could acquire the wealth of other nations. After defeating an enemy, an army would dig into the spoils. Those fortunate enough to find gems, precious metals, or other great valuables among the possessions of their defeated foes might become instantly rich. Almost all could at least supplement their income handsomely.

**Clarke: Caused his army to serve a great service against Tyrus**—He was thirteen years employed in the siege. See Joseph. Antiq. lib. 10 c. 11. In this siege his soldiers endured great hardships. Being continually on duty, their heads became bald by wearing their helmets; and their shoulders bruised and peeled by carrying baskets of earth to the fortifications, and wood, etc., to build towers, etc.

**Clarke: Yet had he no wages, nor his army**—The Tyrians, finding it at last impossible to defend their city, put all their wealth aboard their vessels, sailed out of the port, and escaped for Carthage; and thus Nebuchadnezzar lost all the spoil of one of the richest cities in the world.

**labor strenuously:** This recalls the difficult siege of Tyre. Heads were made bald and shoulders rubbed raw in the protracted siege, which took thirteen or more years. yet neither: The fact was that neither Nebuchadnezzar nor his army received much of a reward for their efforts.

**18-20** Though Nebuchadnezzar laid siege to Tyre for 13 years (585-572 B.C.), the campaign was an economic failure. See note on 26:3-14. Because he had no booty with which to pay his soldiers (it was a simple matter for Tyre to ship her treasures out by sea during the siege), he invaded Egypt to get booty as *wages for his army*.

**Chuck Smith:** Now God is saying, "Look, Nebuchadnezzar was My servant. He destroyed Tyrus but he didn't get paid." By the time he conquered the city, there was no spoil. So neither he nor his army got their pay for the job that they did for Me in the destruction of Tyrus. Therefore they will go down and they will conquer Egypt and there they will get their wages as they take the great wealth of Egypt unto themselves. And so the spoil of Egypt was to be the pay that God gave to Nebuchadnezzar and his troops for the lack of pay in the destruction of Tyrus.<sup>29</sup>

### **Ezekiel 29:19**

**Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I will give the land of Egypt unto Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon; and he shall take her multitude, and take her spoil, and take her prey; and it shall be the wages for his army.**

**Constable 19-20:** Yahweh announced that He would give Egypt to Nebuchadnezzar as payment for executing His judgment against Tyre. Nebuchadnezzar would carry off the wealth of Egypt as spoil and plunder because he had labored for the Lord by defeating Tyre.

The scant historical data indicates that Egypt and Tyre became allies under Pharaoh Hophra (Apries). The extended siege of Tyre was perhaps due to the aid Tyre received from the Egyptians. In such an act Hophra was going contrary to God's purposes. Not only was the siege prolonged by Egyptian support, but some also surmise that Egypt's

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<sup>29</sup> Chuck Smith Sermon Notes, Pastor/founder, Calvary Chapel, Costa Mesa CA

maritime aid enabled Tyre to send away her wealth for security during the siege. When Tyre surrendered about 573 B.C. . . . , Babylonia gained almost no spoils from the long siege (v. 18).

The absolutely consistent justice of God shines through in this prediction. He would even pay back an evil pagan king for serving Him, unconscious as Nebuchadnezzar was of his role. How much more can we count on God being fair with His own (cf. Gen. 18:25; Mark 9:41; Gal. 6:7).

**19-20:** God affirms that He is sovereign over the coming fall of Egypt to Babylon to make up for the **wages** they had not received from their conquest of Tyre. God specifically named Nebuchadnezzar as his instrument (see Jer. 43:8–13). The Babylonian chronicles imply that Babylon invaded Egypt in approximately 568 B.C.

**ESV: I will give the land of Egypt to Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon.** This prophecy was given in 571 b.c. (see note on vv. 17–21), and Nebuchadnezzar conquered Egypt in 568 (this is described in detail in Jeremiah 43–44 and also recorded in Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities* 10.180–182). Egypt was subsequently subject to Persian rule (beginning in 525 b.c.), was conquered by Alexander the Great and made part of his empire in 332, and was conquered by the Romans and became part of the Roman Empire in 31.

### **Ezekiel 29:20**

**I have given him the land of Egypt for his labour wherewith he served against it, because they wrought for me, saith the Lord GOD.**

**Missler:** In other words, Nebuchadnezzar was God’s instrument against Tyre, and God had figured it was time to get them paid, so he sent them down to Egypt. That is what I infer that the Lord was saying.

**Clarke: I have given him the land of Egypt for his labor—**Because he fulfilled the designs of God against Tyre, God promises to reward him with the spoil of Egypt.

Babylon, you see, was to conquer all these nations—including Tyre, Egypt, and, of course, Israel. Babylon was the first great empire.

### **Ezekiel 29:21**

**In that day will I cause the horn of the house of Israel to bud forth, and I will give thee the opening of the mouth in the midst of them; and they shall know that I *am* the LORD.**

**Constable:** When Nebuchadnezzar defeated Egypt, the defeat would provide hope for Israel because Egypt was Israel's ancient enemy. Evidently Nebuchadnezzar invaded and defeated Egypt about 568-567 B.C. It would be as though a horn began to grow on Israel, the sign of new strength to come (cf. 1 Sam. 2:1; 1 Kings 22:11; Ps. 92:10; Jer. 48:25). A

horn is also a symbol of Messiah in some passages, and a branch is a symbol in others (cf. Ps. 132:17; Isa. 4:2; Jer. 23:5; Zech. 3:8; Luke 1:69), but the context argues against a messianic interpretation here. Furthermore, no Messiah or any other notable ruler appeared in Israel at this time. Some commentators, nevertheless, see a messianic reference here.

The Lord also promised to open Ezekiel's mouth then in the midst of the exiles. Formerly the Lord had restrained the prophet from speaking (3:26), but he long since (since 585 B.C.) had resumed speaking (cf. 33:21-22). The Israelites would be more open to messages from the Lord and more able to assert themselves because their old nemesis had suffered humiliation.

All these events would teach people Yahweh's unique deity. This is one of the main lessons of the book. The promise occurs in the two oracles in this chapter three times (vv. 6, 9, 16) and in the book more than 40 times.

**[In that day]** In that day—the day of the taking of Egypt, or the beginning of the war on Egypt by Nebuchadnezzar (Ezekiel 29:17).

**Dake:** [will I cause the horn of the house of Israel to bud forth, and I will give thee the opening of the mouth in the midst of them] This is not explained, but it could refer to some special favor being granted a leader of Israel in Babylon, or a favor being shown all the Jews in Babylon. It could not refer to King Jehoiachin being released from prison, which was ten years later (Jeremiah 51:31); neither could it refer to some special favor shown Daniel, as far as we know.

**Clarke:** Will I cause the horn of the house of Israel to bud—This may refer generally to the restoration; but particularly to Zerubbabel, who became one of the leaders of the people from Babylon. Or it may respect Daniel, or Mordecai, or Jeconiah, who, about this time, was brought out of prison by Evil-merodach, and afterwards kindly treated.

**Wycliffe:** In that day. Cf. verses 19, 20; 30:9; 24:26, 27. The horn. Symbolizing Israel's restoration to power (cf. I Sam 2:1, 10; Ps 92:10). Psalm 132:17 indicates that the Davidic dynasty is to be restored. Opening of the mouth. The verification of the prophet's words to his fellow exiles (16:63), that the divine judgments would be followed by new hope.<sup>30</sup>

In that day: This refers to the day when Egypt would fall to Babylon, and a prophecy about the Messiah should not be read into this text. Cause the horn ... of Israel to spring forth means that the nation would renew its strength. Renewal and encouragement would come to God's people in exile when they heard about Egypt's downfall orchestrated by the hand of God, who is holy and sovereign. I will open your mouth was God's promise to restore Ezekiel's speech (see 33:22) and therefore to magnify Himself and His ways: know that I am the LORD.

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<sup>30</sup> Pfeiffer, C. F. (1962). *The Wycliffe Bible commentary : Old Testament* (Eze 29:21). Chicago: Moody Press.

**ESV:** The final note of promise appears to be for Ezekiel himself. The phrase open your lips does not relate to Ezekiel's muteness (which would have ended years earlier than the events foretold here; see 33:21–22). Rather, it affirms that, after all those years, Ezekiel's prophetic ministry was to be vindicated.

**Danile: A Horn Will Sprout For Israel** The word "horn" is used very often in the Old Testament in an analogous sense. Unfortunately, in our day and age its meaning is not very clear. Back in the days before mankind invented tanks and automatic weapons, it was the animals who had horns, tusks, and teeth that were looked upon as the creatures with the most power.

Understanding this, we see that the horn was a symbol of strength. That's what David meant when he prayed, 2Sam. 22:3 My God, my rock, in whom I take refuge, my shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold and my refuge; My savior, You save me from violence.

And so here, God is saying that when Egypt is made low, Israel will sprout a horn. Israel will become more powerful than Egypt.