

**ORACLES AGAINST
THE NATIONS
EZEKIEL 25:1 - 32:32**

Introduction to Ezekiel 25-32

To this point the oracles in the Ezekiel scroll have been highly critical of Judah: the general infidelity of the people to the covenant, and the attempts of the leadership to seek security by looking to Egypt rather than YHWH to free them from the Babylonian yoke. Ezekiel is addressing his fellow exiles. They have already been through the siege that led to the capture of their city by the Babylonian army. Ezekiel is challenging them to reflect on their infidelity that led to YHWH's withdrawing his presence, and so his protection. He is also trying to stop them seeking consolation in false hopes of a quick end to their exile. In fact worse is yet to come. The folly of the leadership in Jerusalem looking to Egypt will mean a return of the Babylonian army and the destruction of their city and sanctuary. YHWH is determined, through this punishment, that they will face up to repentance and 'know that I am YHWH'.

Chapter 24, with the beginning of the second siege which will lead to the destruction of Jerusalem, marks a turning point in the content of Ezekiel's oracles. The fall of the city is announced in chapter 33. The threats that have filled chapters 1-24 have been proved right. After chapter 33 the oracles speak of a restoration of the nation and a new beginning. Chapters 25-32 fill the gap between the beginning of the siege and its completion.

Those responsible for the scroll place here a series of oracles in which Ezekiel speaks of the punishment which YHWH will inflict upon the surrounding nations. To this point there has been no let up of the threat of more punishment and the need for a radical change in Judah's relationship with YHWH. However, YHWH could hardly be presented as just if Judah was the only nation that he chose to punish. While the siege is going on in the background, our gaze is deflected to contemplate God's judgment of the nations that are rejoicing in Judah's humiliation.

In chapters 25-28 we find oracles against Ammon (25:1-7), Moab (25:8-11), Edom (25:12-14), Philistia (25:15-17), Tyre (26:1 - 28:19) and Sidon (28:20-23). Chapters 29-32 are directed against Egypt. The absence of an oracle against Babylon is understandable when we remember that Ezekiel's ministry took place in Babylonia, and that, for him, Babylon was God's instrument in bringing Judah to acknowledge and repent of its infidelity.

It is not without significance that we find similar listings of oracles in the Isaiah and Jeremiah scrolls. In the Isaiah scroll we find oracles against Babylon (Isaiah 13:1 - 14:27 - composed when Babylon's power was a past memory), Philistia (Isaiah 14:28-32), Moab (Isaiah 15:1 - 16:14), Damascus (Isaiah 17:1-3), Egypt (Isaiah 19:1-15), and Tyre and Sidon (Isaiah 23:1-18). In the Hebrew Version of the Jeremiah scroll the oracles against the nations are located at the end of the scroll (chapters 46-51). In the Greek Version, however, we find them in a position parallel to that of the Ezekiel scroll: in chapters 25-31 after the oracles critical of Judah and before the oracles proclaiming salvation. There are oracles against Egypt (Jeremiah 46:2-26; Greek 26:2-25), Philistia (Jeremiah 47:1-7; Greek 29:1-7), Moab (Jeremiah 48:1-47; Greek 31:1-44), Ammon (Jeremiah 49:1-6; Greek 30:17-21), Edom (Jeremiah 49:7-22; Greek 30:1-16), Damascus (Jeremiah 49:23-27; Greek 30:29-33), Kedar (Jeremiah 49:28-33; Greek 30:23-28), Elam (Jeremiah 49:34-39; Greek 25:14-19); and Babylon (Jeremiah 50-51; Greek 27-28).

The oracle against Ammon (26:1-5; see 21:33-34; compare Isaiah 25:1-7; Jeremiah 49:1-6) presupposes the gloating of Judah's eastern neighbour over the destruction of Jerusalem and its temple.

The Ammonites were thought of as descending from Lot (see Genesis 19:38). This made them close relatives of Israel. The history of relations between these two neighbours is one of constant skirmishes. The Ammonites, along with Israel and Judah, were caught up in the Assyrian advance. After the defeat of Assyria and Egypt by the Babylonian army at Carchemish (605), they were subject to Babylonian power in the region. In the build up to the first siege of Jerusalem, they were used by Babylon against Judah (see 2Kings 24:2).

Later they joined with Judah in an anti-Babylonian, pro-Egyptian alliance. They held back from coming to Judah's aid when Babylon besieged Jerusalem, and so they avoided the total destruction that Jerusalem underwent in 587. This left a bitter feeling against them among the people of Judah, as is evidenced in this oracle.

The mocking by Ammon of the burning of YHWH's sanctuary is seen as a mocking of YHWH. Hence YHWH's anger against them. Verse 4 records the incursions into Ammon and the destruction of its capital city, Rabbah, that was effected by nomadic tribes from the desert.

Verses 6-7 appear to be a later addition. It underscores the fact that what happened to Ammon was the work of YHWH.

¹The word of YHWH came to me: ²Son of man, set your face toward the Ammonites and prophesy against them. ³Say to the Ammonites, Hear the word of the Lord YHWH:

Thus says the Lord YHWH, Because you said, "Aha!" over my sanctuary when it was profaned, and over the land of Israel when it was made desolate, and over the house of Judah when it went into exile; ⁴therefore I am handing you over to the People of the East as a possession. They shall set their encampments among you and pitch their tents in your midst; they shall eat your fruit, and they shall drink your milk. ⁵I will make Rabbah a pasture for camels and Ammon a fold for flocks. Then you shall know that I am YHWH.

⁶For thus says the Lord YHWH: Because you have clapped your hands and stamped your feet and rejoiced with all the malice within you against the land of Israel, ⁷therefore I have stretched out my hand against you, and will hand you over as plunder to the nations. I will cut you off from the peoples and will make you perish out of the countries; I will destroy you. Then you shall know that I am YHWH.

⁸Thus says the Lord YHWH: Because Moab said, The house of Judah is like all the other nations, ⁹therefore I will lay open the flank of Moab from the towns on its frontier, the glory of the country, Beth-jeshimoth, Baal-meon, and Kiriathaim.

¹⁰I will give it along with Ammon to the People of the East as a possession. Thus Ammon shall be remembered no more among the nations, ¹¹and I will execute judgments upon Moab. Then they shall know that I am YHWH.

¹²Thus says the Lord YHWH: Because Edom acted vindictively against the house of Judah and has grievously offended in taking vengeance upon them, ¹³therefore thus says the Lord YHWH, I will stretch out my hand against Edom, and cut off from it humans and animals, and I will make it desolate; from Teman even to Dedan they shall fall by the sword. ¹⁴I will lay my vengeance upon Edom by the hand of my people Israel; and they shall act in Edom according to my anger and according to my wrath; and they shall know my vengeance, says the Lord YHWH.

¹⁵Thus says the Lord YHWH: Because with unending hostilities the Philistines acted in vengeance, and with malice of heart took revenge in destruction; ¹⁶therefore thus says the Lord YHWH, I will stretch out my hand against the Philistines, cut off the Cherethites, and destroy the rest of the seacoast. ¹⁷I will execute great vengeance on them with wrathful punishments. Then they shall know that I am YHWH, when I lay my vengeance on them.

There are close links between the oracle against Moab (25:8-11; compare Isaiah 15:1 - 16:14; Jeremiah 48) and that of Edom's neighbour Ammon (25:2-5). They both shared a history of antipathy with Israel and Judah. Both are mentioned as being used by Babylon against Jerusalem in 598 (see 2Kings 24:2). Their mockery of Jerusalem at its destruction in 587 is seen as a mockery of Judah's claim to a special relationship with YHWH. It is, therefore, a mockery of YHWH, for which they share Ammon's fate.

Edom was originally south of Moab to the east of the Arabah. Later, pressure from Arabia saw the Edomites move west. This produced pressure on Judah's southern border. They were considered even closer to the people of Israel in their origins than Ammon and Moab. Esau their ancestor was Jacob's brother. They shared the problems faced by their neighbours, being part of the anti-Babylonian alliance of 594 (see Jeremiah 27:3), but joining with Babylon in ravaging Judah in 587 (see Psalm 137:7; Obadiah 11-14). The oracle against Edom (25:12-14; compare Isaiah 34; Jeremiah 49:7-22) speaks of YHWH's threat of vengeance for their aggression against Judah. Verse 14 justifies action that post-exilic Judah might want to take against its southern neighbour.

The oracle against Philistia (25:15-17; compare Isaiah 14:28-32; Jeremiah 47:1-7) is closely connected with the previous oracle against Edom. The 'unending hostilities' between Israel and the Philistines date from the very beginning of Israel's emergence in the hill country of Canaan. Like Edom they took advantage of the humiliation of Judah. The oracle threatens YHWH's vengeance. The 'Cherethites' is a reminder of the origin of some of the Philistines in Crete (see 1Samuel 30:14; Zephaniah 2:5).

This is the fourth oracle that has a date attached. The three previous datings (1:2; 8:1; 20:1) placed the attached oracles in the years between the capture of Jerusalem in 598 and the destruction of the city and temple in 587. This oracle against Tyre (compare Amos 1:9-10; Isaiah 23:1-18; Joel 4:4-8; Zechariah 9:2-4) is dated 587, the eleventh year of the king Jeconiah's being held as a hostage in Babylon.

Tyre was a rock fortress (the Hebrew for Tyre is **צֵיִר** = 'rock') surrounded by sea just off the coast of Phoenicia (see the map page 119). Its position protected it from attack by land or sea, and it was the main trading post in the area from the 10th to the 7th centuries BC. Elements of its trade will be described in chapter 27.

When Assyria became the dominant power in the area in the 8th century, Tyre, like its neighbours Syria and Israel, paid a tribute to maintain its independence. Things changed dramatically in 605BC when Babylon defeated the combined forces of Assyria and Egypt. Tyre joined Judah, Edom, Amon, Moab and Sidon in 594 in plotting rebellion against Babylon. Nebuchadrezzar attempted a blockade of Tyre. The siege lasted 13 years and the outcome was uncertain. It appears that Tyre accepted to pay tribute to Babylon, and Babylon agreed to lift the siege.

The first oracle (verses 1-6) attacks Tyre for its gloating over the destruction of Jerusalem (verse 2). Land trade to and from Egypt passed through Palestine, and, especially under King Josiah (died 609) Jerusalem had asserted her power over this trade. Tyre delights in the fall of Jerusalem her trade rival.

Drawing on his conviction of the justice of YHWH, Ezekiel asserts that Tyre will suffer the consequences of its pride and arrogance. Tyre itself will suffer the fate of Jerusalem (verses 4-5), as will its 'daughter-towns' (verse 6), the towns on the mainland that are outposts for Tyre.

Verse 3 spoke of 'many nations'. The second oracle (verse 7) focusses on Nebuchadrezzar, king of Babylon.

¹In the eleventh year, on the first day of the month, the word of YHWH came to me: ²Son of man, because Tyre said concerning Jerusalem, "Aha, broken is the gateway of the peoples; it has swung open to me; I shall be replenished, now that it is wasted."

³Therefore, thus says the Lord YHWH: See, I am against you, O Tyre! I will hurl many nations against you, as the sea hurls its waves. ⁴They shall destroy the walls of Tyre and break down its towers. I will scrape its soil from it and make it a bare rock. ⁵It shall become, in the midst of the sea, a place for spreading nets. I have spoken, says the Lord YHWH. It shall become plunder for the nations, ⁶and its daughter-towns in the country shall be killed by the sword. Then they shall know that I am YHWH.

⁷For thus says the Lord YHWH: I will bring against Tyre from the north King Nebuchadrezzar of Babylon, king of kings, together with horses, chariots, cavalry, and a great and powerful army.

A later amplification of Ezekiel's oracle (26:8-14)

⁸Your daughter-towns in the country he shall put to the sword. He shall set up a siege-wall against you, cast up a ramp against you, and raise a roof of shields against you. ⁹He shall direct the shock of his battering rams against your walls and break down your towers with his axes. ¹⁰His horses shall be so many that their dust shall cover you. At the noise of cavalry, wheels, and chariots your very walls shall shake, when he enters your gates like those entering a breached city. ¹¹With the hoofs of his horses he shall trample all your streets. He shall put your people to the sword, and your mighty pillars shall fall to the ground.

¹²They will plunder your riches and loot your merchandise; they shall break down your walls and destroy your fine houses. Your stones and timber and soil they shall cast into the water. ¹³I will silence the music of your songs; the sound of your lyres shall be heard no more. ¹⁴I will make you a bare rock; you shall be a place for spreading nets. You shall never again be rebuilt, for I YHWH have spoken, says the Lord YHWH.

The surrounding nations lament the fall of Tyre (26:15-18)

The third oracle seems to be added in the light of chapter 27 (compare 27:28-36). It speaks of the destruction of Tyre. This did not happen as Ezekiel expected. Later, in an oracle dated 671 (29:17-21), Ezekiel will qualify his prediction.

¹⁵Thus says the Lord YHWH to Tyre: Shall not the coastlands shake at the sound of your fall, when the wounded groan, when slaughter goes on within you? ¹⁶Then all the princes of the sea shall step down from their thrones; they shall remove their robes and strip off their embroidered garments. They shall clothe themselves with trembling, and shall sit on the ground; they shall tremble every moment, and be appalled at you. ¹⁷And they shall raise a lamentation over you, and say to you: How you have vanished from the seas, O city renowned, once mighty on the sea, you and your inhabitants, who imposed your terror on all the mainland! ¹⁸Now the coastlands tremble on the day of your fall; the coastlands by the sea are dismayed at your passing.

This is the fourth in an initial series of four anti-Tyre oracles. In the language of myth, Tyre's destruction is declared irreversible. There is a parallel section in the oracle against Egypt (see 32:17-32).

The 'deep' of verse 19 is the primeval waters of pre-creation chaos (Genesis 1:2). Ezekiel alludes to the 'great waters' of the primeval Flood (Genesis 6-8). The 'pit' of verse 20 (see also 28:8; 31:14; 32:18) is the grave that opens into the subterranean land of 'Sheol' (see 31:15-17; 32:21).

There is no coming back from Sheol. The destruction of Tyre is so complete that a reversal of fortune is not possible. In a different setting, Jeremiah speaks of devastation in terms of a reversal to primeval chaos. His words express something of what Ezekiel sees as the fate of Tyre:

I looked on the earth, and lo, it was
waste and void; and to the heavens,
and they had no light.

I looked on the mountains, and lo,
they were quaking, and all the hills
moved to and fro.

I looked, and lo, there was no one at
all, and all the birds of the air had fled.

I looked, and lo, the fruitful land was
a desert, and all its cities were laid in
ruins before YHWH, before his fierce
anger.

– Jeremiah 4:23-26

In fact Tyre was not captured till the time of Alexander the Great in the 4th century BC. He constructed a causeway from the land, and his army surrounded, captured and destroyed the fortress. The causeway collected silt, such that Tyre was never again completely surrounded by the sea.

**¹⁹For thus says the Lord YHWH:
When I make you a city laid waste,
like cities that are not inhabited,
when I bring up the deep over you,
and the great waters cover you,
²⁰then I will thrust you down with
those who descend into the Pit, to
the people of long ago, and I will
make you live in the world below,
among primeval ruins, with those
who go down to the Pit, so that you
will not be inhabited or have a place
in the land of the living. ²¹I will
bring you to a dreadful end, and you
shall be no more; though sought for,
you will never be found again, says
the Lord YHWH.**

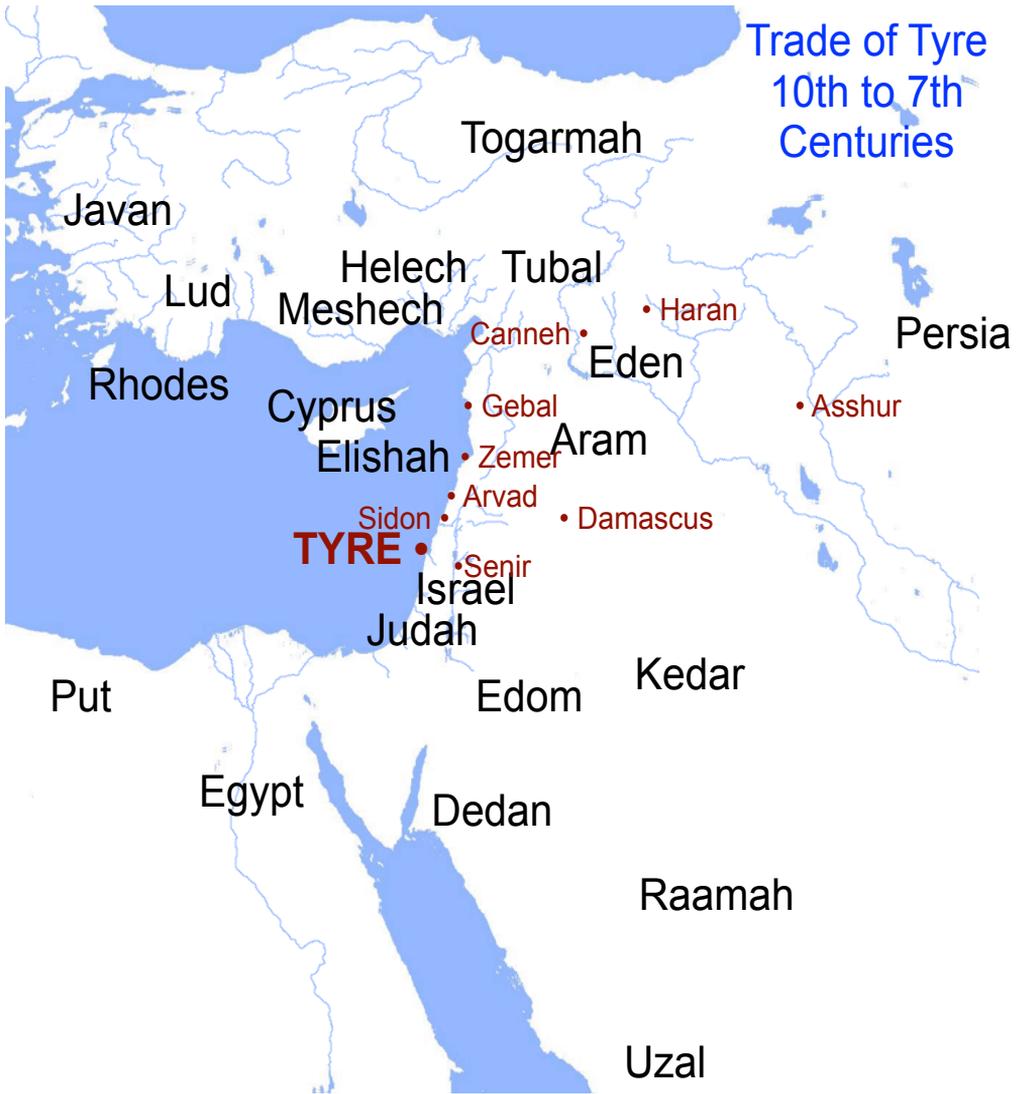
¹The word of YHWH came to me: ²Now you, son of man, raise a lamentation over Tyre, ³and say to Tyre, which sits at the entrance to the sea, merchant of the peoples on many coastlands, Thus says the Lord YHWH: O Tyre, you have said, "I am perfect in beauty." ⁴Your borders are in the heart of the seas; your builders made perfect your beauty. ⁵They made all your planks of fir trees from Senir; they took a cedar from Lebanon to make a mast for you. ⁶From oaks of Bashan they made your oars; they made your deck of cypresses from the Kition islands, inlaid with ivory. ⁷Of fine embroidered linen from Egypt was your sail, serving as your ensign; blue and purple from the coasts of Elishah was your awning.

⁸The inhabitants of Sidon and Arvad were your rowers; skilled men of Zemer were within you, they were your pilots. ⁹The elders of Gebal and its artisans were within you, caulking your seams; all the ships of the sea with their mariners were within you, to barter for your wares. ¹⁰Persians, Lydians and Puteans were in your army, your mighty warriors; they hung shield and helmet in you; they gave you splendour. ¹¹Men of Arvad and Helech were on your walls all around; men of Gamad were at your towers. They hung their quivers all around your walls; they made perfect your beauty.

¹²Tarshish did business with you out of the abundance of your great wealth; silver, iron, tin, and lead they exchanged for your wares. ¹³Javan, Tubal, and Meshech traded with you; they exchanged human beings and vessels of bronze for your merchandise. ¹⁴Beth-togarmah exchanged for your wares horses, war horses, and mules. ¹⁵The Rhodians traded with you; many coastlands were your own special markets; they brought you in payment ivory tusks and ebony. ¹⁶Edom did business with you because of your abundant goods; they exchanged for your wares turquoise, purple, embroidered work, fine linen, coral, and rubies.

¹⁷Judah and the land of Israel traded with you; they exchanged for your merchandise wheat from Minneth, millet, honey, oil, and balm.

¹⁸Damascus traded with you for your abundant goods—because of your great wealth of every kind—wine of Helbon, and white wool. ¹⁹Vedan and Javan from Uzal entered into trade for your wares; wrought iron, cassia, and sweet cane were bartered for your merchandise. ²⁰Dedan traded with you in saddlecloths for riding. ²¹Arabia and all the princes of Kedar were your favoured dealers in lambs, rams, and goats; in these they did business with you. ²²The merchants of Sheba and Raamah traded with you; they exchanged for your wares the best of all kinds of spices, and all precious stones, and gold. ²³Haran, Canneh, Eden, the merchants of Sheba, Asshur, and Chilmad traded with you. ²⁴These traded with you in choice garments, in clothes of blue and embroidered work, and in carpets of coloured material, bound with cords and made secure; in these they traded with you.



‘Senir’ (verse 5) is the Amorite name for Mount Hermon (see Deuteronomy 3:9). Kition (verse 6) was an important Phoenician colony in southeast Cyprus. ‘Elishah’ (verse 7) may refer to an area of Cyprus (see Genesis 10:4).

‘Tarshish’ may refer to the area of islands of the Aegean (see Genesis 10:4). It may also refer to the Phoenician colony at Tartessos in Spain. In either case ‘ships of Tarshish’ (verse 25) refers to large ships that were able to leave the shore and ply the open sea of the Mediterranean.

‘Sheba’ (verse 23) is in the south-west of the Arabian peninsula.

‘Gamad’ (verse 11), ‘Minneth’ (verse 17), ‘Vedan’ (verse 19) and ‘Chilmad’ (verse 23) are otherwise unknown (the text may be corrupt).

Tyre, the stately galleon, is shipwrecked

²⁵The ships of Tarshish travelled for you in your trade. So you were filled and heavily laden in the heart of the seas. ²⁶Your rowers have brought you into the high seas. The east wind has wrecked you in the heart of the seas. ²⁷Your riches, your wares, your merchandise, your mariners and your pilots, your caulkers, your dealers in merchandise, and all your warriors within you, with all the company that is with you, sink into the heart of the seas on the day of your ruin. ²⁸At the sound of the cry of your pilots the countryside shakes, ²⁹and down from their ships come all that handle the oar. The mariners and all the pilots of the sea stand on the shore ³⁰and wail aloud over you, and cry bitterly. They throw dust on their heads and wallow in ashes; ³¹they make themselves bald for you, and put on sackcloth, and they weep over you in bitterness of soul, with bitter mourning.

³²In their wailing they raise a lamentation for you, and lament over you: "Who was ever destroyed like Tyre in the midst of the sea? ³³When your wares came from the seas, you satisfied many peoples; with your abundant wealth and merchandise you enriched the kings of the earth. ³⁴Now you are wrecked by the seas, in the depths of the waters; your merchandise and all your crew have sunk with you. ³⁵All the inhabitants of the coastlands are appalled at you; and their kings are horribly afraid, their faces are convulsed. ³⁶The merchants among the peoples hiss at you; you have come to a dreadful end and shall be no more forever."

Tyre's position made it the main gateway for trade between the Middle East and the lands that bordered the Mediterranean. The Ezekiel scroll has just listed some of the merchandise imported by Tyre and the areas from which the imports came (verses 12-24). It is in no sense a complete list of the merchandise that passed through Tyre. Fittingly Tyre has been likened to a stately ship (verses 3-11). Now a lament is raised, for the mighty ship has foundered: 'the east wind has wrecked you'(verse 26). The ravages of the east wind were well documented. In Psalm 48 the reaction of the kings when they witnessed the splendour and might of Jerusalem is described in the following words:

As soon as they saw it, they were astounded; they were in panic, they took to flight; trembling took hold of them there, pains as of a woman in labour, as when an east wind shatters the ships of Tarshish.

– Psalm 48:5-7

All the mighty nations and their kings are astonished and appalled at the utter devastation of the once mighty Tyre: 'You have come to a dreadful end and shall be no more forever'(verse 36).

The judgment of Tyre is now personalised in an oracle addressed to its 'prince' who is accused of the great sin: 'your heart is proud' (verses 2; compare Isaiah 14:13-14). As proof of this he is portrayed as claiming to be 'a god'. He sees himself as standing, like the world itself, 'in the heart of the seas', rising like a god above the surrounding chaos. If this oracle belongs to the period when Tyre was stubbornly resisting the siege (587-574), he is being castigated for daring to defy Nebuchadnezzar, which, according to Ezekiel, demonstrates his failure to accept Nebuchadnezzar as YHWH's instrument in punishing sin. YHWH alone can claim 'I am god' (אֲנִי אֱלֹהִים, see Isaiah 45:20; 46:9).

Tyre's power and wealth were a gift from God to be used wisely. Though the prince claimed to be 'wiser than Daniel' (the Daniel of Ugaritic mythology, not the Daniel of the Book of the Older Testament; see 14:14,20), he used his wisdom (his 'know how') to exalt his own pride.

In verses 6-7, we have YHWH's judgment: Tyre will be overthrown by foreigners. Chapter 26 has already made it clear that these foreigners are under the command of King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon' (26:7).

The prince of Tyre will be 'thrust down to the Pit' (verse 8; compare 26:20).

¹The word of YHWH came to me: ²Son of man, say to the prince of Tyre, Thus says the Lord YHWH: Because your heart is proud and you have said, "I am a god; I sit in the seat of the gods, in the heart of the seas," yet you are but a mortal, and not a god, though you compare your mind with the mind of a god.

³Surely you are wiser than Daniel; no secret is hidden from you; ⁴by your wisdom and your understanding you have amassed wealth for yourself, and have gathered gold and silver into your treasuries. ⁵By your great wisdom in trade you have increased your wealth, and your heart has become proud in your wealth.

⁶Therefore thus says the Lord YHWH: Because you compare your mind with the mind of a god, ⁷therefore, I will bring strangers against you, the most terrible of the nations; they shall draw their swords against the beauty of your wisdom and defile your splendour.

⁸They shall thrust you down to the Pit, and you shall die a violent death in the heart of the seas. ⁹Will you still say, "I am a god," in the presence of those who kill you, though you are but a mortal, and no god, in the hands of those who wound you? ¹⁰You shall die the death of the uncircumcised by the hand of foreigners; for I have spoken, says the Lord YHWH.

¹¹Moreover the word of YHWH came to me: ¹²Son of man, raise a lamentation over the king of Tyre, and say to him, Thus says the Lord YHWH: You were the signet of perfection, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty. ¹³You were in Eden, the garden of God; every precious stone was your covering, carnelian, chrysolite, and moonstone, beryl, onyx, and jasper, sapphire, turquoise, and emerald; and worked in gold were your settings and your engravings. On the day that you were created they were prepared. ¹⁴With an anointed cherub as guardian I placed you; you were on the holy mountain of God; you walked among the stones of fire. ¹⁵You were blameless in your ways from the day that you were created, until iniquity was found in you. ¹⁶In the abundance of your trade you were filled with violence, and you sinned; so I cast you as a profane thing from the mountain of God, and the guardian cherub drove you out from among the stones of fire. ¹⁷Your heart was proud because of your beauty; you corrupted your wisdom for the sake of your splendour. I cast you to the ground; I exposed you before kings, to feast their eyes on you. ¹⁸By the multitude of your iniquities, in the unrighteousness of your trade, you profaned your sanctuaries. So I brought out fire from within you; it consumed you, and I turned you to ashes on the earth in the sight of all who saw you. ¹⁹All who know you among the peoples are appalled at you; you have come to a dreadful end and shall be no more forever.

It is typical of the Ezekiel scroll for a judgment to be followed by a 'lament'. In this case the lament is dictated by YHWH. The prince is called here 'king', for the well-being of the city has been entrusted to him. Tyre is now a symbol for the created world, and its prince is 'Man' to whom YHWH has entrusted the care of the created universe. He is called 'the signet of perfection', the 'image' and 'likeness' of God (Genesis 1:26). The signet ring is a mark of royalty.

In verse 13 we see him clothed in the vestments of the high priest of the sanctuary (see Exodus 28:17-20). The sanctuary in this case is 'Eden, the garden of God'(see Genesis 2:8-9). 'Eden' here has an initial long e, to distinguish it from 'Eden', with a short e, the Aramaic kingdom of 27:23.

In the Genesis version of the primeval narrative, man and woman, because of their sin, were banished from paradise. They could not return as it was guarded by 'cherubs' (Genesis 3:24). It is as though God made an exception for the prince of Tyre, who is pictured with a cherub 'on the holy mountain of God'(verse 14). He walked among the gods who inhabited heaven: the 'stones of fire'. Like Enoch (Genesis 5:22,24), Noah (Genesis 6:9), and Abraham (Genesis 17:1), he was 'blameless'(verse 15). But he abused his status through 'violence' (כַּחֲסֵד, verse 16; compare Genesis 6:11,13), and was banished from 'the holy mountain of God'. His beauty issued in pride, and 'you corrupted your wisdom'(verse 17).

Drawing on ancient mythological language the king of Tyre is a symbol of man, gifted with intelligence to continue bringing order to God's creation by wise administration, but who sinned, profaning what God intended as a sanctuary (a place of encounter with God).

In verses 20-23 we have an oracle against Sidon, 40ks north of Tyre, and the main city of Phoenicia in ancient times (see Genesis 10:15). Because of its trade, Tyre, as we have seen, overtook Sidon as the dominant city in the region.

Sidon joined Tyre, Judah and the other nations in the anti-Babylonian plot of 394BC (see Jeremiah 27:3).

The focus in these verses is not on Sidon's sin, but on the manifesting of the majesty and holiness of YHWH.

Verse 24 acts as a concluding comment on the main thrust of chapters 25-28.

The editors of the scroll do not wish to leave this section of oracles against the nations without foreshadowing the will of YHWH to 'gather the house of Israel from the peoples among whom they are scattered' (verse 25; compare 11:17; 20:34,41). All the nations will see that YHWH, the Holy One, is faithful to his commitment to (covenant with) Israel. 'They shall know that I am YHWH their God' (verse 26).

²⁰The word of YHWH came to me:

²¹Son of man, set your face toward Sidon, and prophesy against it,

²²and say, Thus says the Lord YHWH:

I am against you, O Sidon, and I will gain glory in your midst. They shall know that I am YHWH when I execute judgments in it, and manifest my holiness in it; ²³for I will send pestilence into it, and bloodshed into its streets; and the dead shall fall in its midst, by the sword that is against it on every side. And they shall know that I am YHWH.

²⁴The house of Israel shall no longer find a pricking brier or a piercing thorn among all their neighbours who have treated them with contempt. And they shall know that I am the Lord YHWH.

²⁵Thus says the Lord YHWH: When I gather the house of Israel from the peoples among whom they are scattered, and manifest my holiness in them in the sight of the nations, then they shall settle on their own soil that I gave to my servant Jacob.

²⁶They shall live in safety in it, and shall build houses and plant vineyards. They shall live in safety, when I execute judgments upon all their neighbours who have treated them with contempt. And they shall know that I am YHWH their God.

¹In the tenth year, in the tenth month, on the twelfth day of the month, the word of YHWH came to me: ²Son of man, set your face against Pharaoh king of Egypt, and prophesy against him and against all Egypt;

³speak, and say, Thus says the Lord YHWH: I am against you, Pharaoh king of Egypt, the great crocodile sprawling in the midst of its channels, saying, "My Nile is my own; I made it for myself."

⁴I will put hooks in your jaws, and make the fish of your channels stick to your scales. I will draw you up from your channels, with all the fish of your channels sticking to your scales. ⁵I will fling you into the wilderness, you and all the fish of your channels; you shall fall in the open field, and not be gathered and buried. To the animals of the earth and to the birds of the air I have given you as food. ⁶Then all the inhabitants of Egypt shall know that I am YHWH.

Because you were a staff of reed to the house of Israel; ⁷when they grasped you with the hand, you broke, and tore all their shoulders; and when they leaned on you, you broke, and made all their legs unsteady. ⁸Therefore, thus says the Lord YHWH: I will bring a sword upon you, and will cut off from you human being and animal; ⁹and the land of Egypt shall be a desolation and a waste. Then they shall know that I am YHWH.

The space given to the oracles against Egypt comes as no surprise when we consider that Egypt was the main nation opposing Babylon, and therefore, in Ezekiel's view, opposing YHWH's determination to punish Judah and bring her to repentance. Egypt represented the main temptation enticing Judah to look to a foreign alliance for security, rather than to YHWH. This was the case with Jehoiakim. Only the capture of Jerusalem in 598 could demonstrate the folly of his policy. But the lesson was not learned. Zedekiah looked in the same direction, and so brought on the destruction of the city in 587.

There are seven units of oracles against Egypt (mirroring the seven oracles against Tyre). This opening oracle (29:1-16) is dated in 588 (the tenth year of the reign of the exiled king Jehoiachin), during the siege.

The Pharaoh is likened to a crocodile (an embodiment of the mythical dragon of the deep). His claim of complete ownership of the life-giving Nile is a claim of divinity. His pride will be brought low. YHWH will hunt and catch him as one hunts and catches the crocodile (verses 4-6).

In Isaiah we hear the Assyrian king mocking Egypt, calling it 'a broken reed' (Isaiah 36:6). Here Ezekiel blames Egypt for daring to think it could support Israel, when YHWH was determined to punish his people. Israel (Judah) chose to lean on Egypt, instead of leaning on YHWH. The reed pierced and injured its hand, and broke, unable to support the weight. YHWH will punish Egypt for opposing his will.

Verses 9-12 expand on the previous verses. The desolation will be complete, from Migdol in the delta, the extreme north-east frontier, to Syene (modern Aswan) on the southern border just north of the first cataract of the Nile.

We are told that the inhabitants of Egypt will be scattered (verse 12). The 40 years (verses 11 and 13) echoes the 40 years of Israel's wanderings in the wilderness.

However 'at the end of 40 years' (that is when the scattered generation has died out) YHWH will gather them back to their land. The land, however, will not be in Lower (northern) Egypt (the delta area close to Judah), but 'the land of Pathros' (verse 14) which is in Upper (southern) Egypt, south of Memphis. It will be further away from Judah. It will also be humbled (verse 15). Israel will never again be tempted to rely on Egypt (verse 16).

⁹Because you said, "The Nile is mine, and I made it," ¹⁰therefore, I am against you, and against your channels, and I will make the land of Egypt an utter waste and desolation, from Migdol to Syene, as far as the border of Cush. ¹¹No human foot shall pass through it, and no animal foot shall pass through it; it shall be uninhabited forty years. ¹²I will make the land of Egypt a desolation among desolated countries; and her cities shall be a desolation forty years among cities that are laid waste. I will scatter the Egyptians among the nations, and disperse them among the countries.

¹³Further, thus says the Lord YHWH: At the end of forty years I will gather the Egyptians from the peoples among whom they were scattered; ¹⁴and I will restore the fortunes of Egypt, and bring them back to the land of Pathros, the land of their origin; and there they shall be a lowly kingdom. ¹⁵It shall be the most lowly of the kingdoms, and never again exalt itself above the nations; and I will make them so small that they will never again rule over the nations. ¹⁶The Egyptians shall never again be the reliance of the house of Israel; they will recall their iniquity, when they turned to them for aid. Then they shall know that I am the Lord YHWH.

¹⁷In the twenty-seventh year, in the first month, on the first day of the month, the word of YHWH came to me: ¹⁸Son of man, King Nebuchadrezzar of Babylon made his army labour hard against Tyre; every head was made bald and every shoulder was rubbed bare; yet neither he nor his army got anything from Tyre to pay for the labour that he had expended against it.

¹⁹Therefore thus says the Lord YHWH: I will give the land of Egypt to King Nebuchadrezzar of Babylon; and he shall carry off its wealth and despoil it and plunder it; and it shall be the wages for his army. ²⁰I have given him the land of Egypt as his payment for which he labored, because they worked for me, says the Lord YHWH.

²¹On that day I will cause a horn to sprout up for the house of Israel, and I will open your lips among them. Then they shall know that I am YHWH.

This second oracle is dated 571, by which time it was clear that Ezekiel's earlier oracle about the fall of Tyre (see 26:7), and even his oracles about the fall of Egypt (see 29:12) had not worked out as Ezekiel had expected.

Basic to Ezekiel's theology, shared with his contemporaries, is that YHWH controls history, and is free to act as he wills. This meant that earlier oracles thought to have come from YHWH always need to be re-examined in the light of history to discover meanings in YHWH's word that were not fully, not even at times properly, understood at the time (compare Isaiah 16:13-14 in relation to an oracle against Moab).

Ezekiel sees in the lifting of the siege of Tyre, the freeing up of the Babylonian army to move against Egypt. The expected defeat of Egypt has only been delayed. Now it is YHWH's will to place Egypt in the power of Nebuchadrezzar, his chosen instrument to humiliate proud Egypt.

In verse 21 Ezekiel links the restoration of Israel with the coming destruction of Egypt by Nebuchadrezzar. The implication of verse 21 is that Ezekiel has been taunted by the failure of his earlier oracles (compare 12:27). YHWH is assuring him that he will continue to open Ezekiel's lips as his chosen instrument in revealing his word. He needed this reassurance (compare Isaiah 5:19 and 49:4).

This third unit (30:1-19) is the only one that is not dated. It contains four oracles.

Verses 1-3 recall the following from Isaiah:

Wail, for the day of YHWH is near; it will come like destruction from the Almighty.

– Isaiah 13:6 (compare Joel 1:15)

The ‘clouds’ indicate a theophany. It will be a ‘time of doom for the nations’.

It threatens the complete collapse of Egypt - something that terrifies Cush – the peoples beyond Egypt’s southern frontier (see 29:10). ‘Put’ (see also 27:10) is identified in the Greek and Latin Versions as Libya. More precisely it seems to refer to western Libya near Cyrene. ‘Lud’ (see 29:10) is the land of the Lydians in south-west Turkey. ‘Kub’ remains a puzzle. Perhaps it should read ‘Lub’. The Versions identify it as Libya (east of Put). All these lands are connected with Egypt (see Genesis 10:6), and the reference is to mercenaries serving in the Egyptian army.

The second oracle in this unit (verses 6-9) predicts the complete destruction of Egypt from the north (Migdol) to the south (Syene) See Ezekiel 29:10.

YHWH is sending messengers up the Nile to the lands south of Egypt to tell them of the destruction of Egypt ‘on the day of Egypt’s doom’.

¹The word of YHWH came to me:

²Son of man, prophesy, and say, Thus says the Lord YHWH: Wail, “Alas for the day!” ³For a day is near, the day of YHWH is near; it will be a day of clouds, a time of doom for the nations. ⁴A sword shall come upon Egypt, and anguish shall be in Cush, when the slain fall in Egypt, and its wealth is carried away, and its foundations are torn down. ⁵Cush, and Put, and Lud, and all Arabia, and Kub, and the people of the allied land shall fall with them by the sword.

⁶Thus says YHWH: Those who support Egypt shall fall, and its proud might shall come down; from Migdol to Syene they shall fall within it by the sword, says the Lord YHWH. ⁷They shall be desolated among other desolated countries, and their cities shall lie among cities laid waste. ⁸Then they shall know that I am YHWH, when I have set fire to Egypt, and all who help it are broken.

⁹On that day, messengers shall go out from me in ships to terrify the unsuspecting Cush; and anguish shall come upon them on the day of Egypt’s doom; for it is coming!

¹⁰Thus says the Lord YHWH: I will put an end to Egypt's pomp, by the hand of King Nebuchadrezzar of Babylon. ¹¹He and his people with him, the most terrible of the nations, shall be brought in to destroy the land; and they shall draw their swords against Egypt, and fill the land with the slain.

¹²I will dry up the channels, and will sell the land into the hand of evildoers; I will bring desolation upon the land and everything in it by the hand of foreigners; I YHWH have spoken.

¹³Thus says the Lord YHWH: I will destroy the idols and put an end to the images in Memphis; there shall no longer be a prince in the land of Egypt; so I will put fear in the land of Egypt. ¹⁴I will make Pathros a desolation, and will set fire to Zoan, and will execute acts of judgment on Thebes. ¹⁵I will pour my wrath upon Pelusium, the stronghold of Egypt, and cut off the hordes of Thebes. ¹⁶I will set fire to Egypt; Pelusium shall be in great agony; Thebes shall be breached, and Memphis face adversaries by day.

¹⁷The young men of On and of Pibeseth shall fall by the sword; and the cities themselves shall go into captivity. ¹⁸At Tehaphnehes the day shall be dark, when I break there the dominion of Egypt, and its proud might shall come to an end; the city shall be covered by a cloud, and its daughter-towns shall go into captivity. ¹⁹Thus I will execute acts of judgment on Egypt. Then they shall know that I am YHWH.

The third oracle in this unit (verses 10-12) returns to the Babylonian conquest. The word translated 'pomp' (נִיבּוּז) in verse 10 is repeated 13 times in these oracles against Egypt. It speaks of the proud and boastful display of wealth and power. The more general threat expressed in verses 1-9 is supplemented here with a historical reference to Nebuchadrezzar, YHWH's instrument in carrying out his judgment.

The final oracle in this unit (verses 13-19) identifies in a rather random way different parts of Egypt that will experience YHWH's punishment. 'Memphis' (verse 13; 27ks south of modern Cairo) was the capital of Egypt under Pharaoh Amasis (569-526). The god Ptah was especially revered there. 'Pathros' (verse 14; see 29:14) is in Upper (southern) Egypt. 'Zoan' (verse 14) in the eastern delta was the capital under the great Pharaoh Ramses II (1292-1225). 'Thebes' (verse 14) is in Middle Egypt (today's Luxor and Karnak). 'Pelusium' (verse 15) was the eastern port of Egypt, where in 525 Egypt was defeated by Persia.

'On' (verse 17) is Heliopolis, 10ks north-west of modern Cairo, the centre of sun-worship. 'Pibeseth' (verse 17; the 'house of the goddess Bastet') is in the eastern delta. It is mentioned in Jeremiah (43:7-9; 44:1). Many from Judah sought refuge there in 587 on the collapse of Jerusalem. 'Tehaphnehes' was a fortress town on the eastern frontier of Egypt.

The oracle (verses 20-26) of this fourth unit is dated 587, shortly before the walls of Jerusalem were breached and the city destroyed. It appears to refer to the unsuccessful attempt by Pharaoh Hophra to break the siege. Egypt's power has been broken and there is no possibility of healing.

The Pharaoh is resisting, by brandishing the sword again. But it will be to no avail. YHWH will break both his arms.

We have already noted that the scattering of the Egyptians among the nations was repeated in the material inserted in chapter 29 (see verse 19).

The key point is that Judah must not look to the strong arm of Egypt to free it from Babylon. There is a stronger arm at work in history, and it is that of YHWH, who alone can restore Judah. The restoration demands their recognition of YHWH and their repentance. 'Then they shall know that I am YHWH' (verse 26).

²⁰In the eleventh year, in the first month, on the seventh day of the month, the word of YHWH came to me: ²¹Son of man, I have broken the arm of Pharaoh king of Egypt; it has not been bound up for healing or wrapped with a bandage, so that it may become strong to wield the sword.

²²Therefore thus says the Lord YHWH: I am against Pharaoh king of Egypt, and will break his arms, both the strong arm and the one that was broken; and I will make the sword fall from his hand. ²³I will scatter the Egyptians among the nations, and disperse them throughout the lands. ²⁴I will strengthen the arms of the king of Babylon, and put my sword in his hand; but I will break the arms of Pharaoh, and he will groan before him with the groans of one mortally wounded. ²⁵I will strengthen the arms of the king of Babylon, but the arms of Pharaoh shall fall. And they shall know that I am YHWH, when I put my sword into the hand of the king of Babylon. He shall stretch it out against the land of Egypt, ²⁶and I will scatter the Egyptians among the nations and disperse them throughout the countries. Then they shall know that I am YHWH.

The majesty and beauty of Egypt

¹In the eleventh year, in the third month, on the first day of the month, the word of YHWH came to me: ²Son of man, say to Pharaoh king of Egypt with all his pomp: Who are you like in your greatness?

³Consider Assyria, a Lebanon cedar, with fair branches and forest shade, and of great height, its top among the clouds.

⁴The waters nourished it, the Deep made it grow tall, making its rivers flow around the place it was planted, sending forth its streams to all the trees of the field.

⁵So it towered high above all the trees of the field; its boughs grew large and its branches long, from abundant water in its shoots. ⁶All the birds of the air made their nests in its boughs; under its branches all the animals of the field gave birth to their young; and in its shade all great nations lived. ⁷It was beautiful in its greatness, in the length of its branches; for its roots went down to abundant water. ⁸The cedars in the garden of God could not rival it, nor the fir trees equal its boughs; the plane trees were as nothing compared with its branches; no tree in the garden of God was like it in beauty. ⁹I made it beautiful with its mass of branches, the envy of all the trees of Eden that were in the garden of God.

The fifth anti-Egyptian unit (31:1-18) is dated 2 months after the previous oracle. The oracle is not connected to any specific historical event. Rather it is in the form of a lament over the coming fall of Egypt, using the image of the felling of a noble tree.

As in 30:10, 'pomp' (verse 2) refers to Egypt's proud and boastful display of wealth and power, likened in verse 3 to Assyria. There is an allusion here to the mythical world tree (compare 17:23; 19:11; see Daniel 4), that draws on the life-force contained in the primeval Deep (Tehom) – the Deep that fought unsuccessfully against the ordering power of the Creator (Genesis 1:2).

Verses 5-8 paint a picture of the majesty, beauty and nurturing and protective power of this tree that is Egypt.

Verse 9 declares that it owes its majesty and beauty to YHWH.

Instead of recognising the blessing of YHWH, Egypt's 'heart was proud'(verse 10). It did ill to forget that, like every creature, it is mortal. It must 'go down to the Pit'(verse 14). YHWH has to humble Egypt by delivering it into the power of Babylon (verse 11). It will be felled and 'handed over to death'(verse 14).

In verses 15-18 we journey with Egypt into the underworld, the world of the dead (Sheol; see 26:19-21 in reference to Tyre; also 32:17-32 in reference to Egypt).

Lebanon and all the nations are in mourning at the fall of this majestic nation, aware of their own mortality.

Egypt is welcomed by the other 'trees' in Sheol, including 'the trees of Eden'(verse 16).

The oracle concludes on the theme of Egypt's folly and pride. No nation should fail to remember its need to submit to the powerful will of YHWH.

¹⁰Therefore thus says the Lord YHWH: Because it towered high and set its top among the clouds, and its heart was proud of its height, ¹¹I gave it into the hand of the prince of the nations; he has dealt with it as its wickedness deserves. I have cast it out. ¹²Foreigners from the most terrible of the nations have cut it down and left it. On the mountains and in all the valleys its branches have fallen, and its boughs lie broken in all the watercourses of the land; and all the peoples of the earth went away from its shade and left it. ¹³On its fallen trunk settle all the birds of the air, and among its boughs lodge all the wild animals. ¹⁴All this is in order that no trees by the waters may grow to lofty height or set their tops among the clouds, and that no trees that drink water may reach up to them in height. For all of them are handed over to death, to the world below; along with all mortals, with those who go down to the Pit.

¹⁵Thus says the Lord YHWH: On the day it went down to Sheol I closed the deep over it and covered it; I restrained its rivers, and its mighty waters were checked. I clothed Lebanon in gloom for it, and all the trees of the field fainted because of it. ¹⁶I made the nations quake at the sound of its fall, when I cast it down to Sheol with those who go down to the Pit; and all the trees of Eden, the choice and best of Lebanon, all that were well watered, were consoled in the world below. ¹⁷They also went down to Sheol with it, to those killed by the sword, along with its allies, those who lived in its shade among the nations. ¹⁸Which among the trees of Eden was like you in glory and in greatness? Now you shall be brought down with the trees of Eden to the world below; you shall lie among the uncircumcised, with those who are killed by the sword. This is Pharaoh and all his pomp, says the Lord YHWH.

Lament over the destruction of Egypt

¹In the twelfth year, in the twelfth month, on the first day of the month, the word of YHWH came to me: ²Son of man, raise a lamentation over Pharaoh king of Egypt, and say to him: You consider yourself a lion among the nations, but you are like a crocodile in the seas; you thrash about in your streams, trouble the water with your feet, and foul your streams.

³Thus says the Lord YHWH: In an assembly of many peoples I will throw my net over you; and I will haul you up in my dragnet. ⁴I will throw you on the ground, on the open field I will fling you, and will cause all the birds of the air to settle on you, and I will let the wild animals of the whole earth gorge themselves with you. ⁵I will strew your flesh on the mountains, and fill the valleys with your carcass. ⁶I will drench the land with your flowing blood up to the mountains, and the watercourses will be filled with you.

⁷When I blot you out, I will cover the heavens, and make their stars dark; I will cover the sun with a cloud, and the moon shall not give its light. ⁸All the shining lights of the heavens I will darken above you, and put darkness on your land, says the Lord YHWH.

The oracle of the sixth anti-Egyptian unit (32:1-16), is dated in 586, the year after the destruction of Jerusalem. It is introduced as a 'lamentation' (verse 2), but verses 3-8 make it clear that the lamenting is over what YHWH is threatening to do to Egypt in the future. The fact that YHWH is going to do it means that it is as good as done. Hence the call to lament.

In the mythical imagery of verses 3-8 Egypt is portrayed in terms of a primeval monster of chaos. Just as YHWH, the creator God, defeated the powers of the primeval chaos, so YHWH will defeat Egypt.

Verse 6, with the image of watercourses red with the blood of the sea monster, recalls the first plague of Egypt (Exodus 7:17) which depicts YHWH as slaughtering Hapi, the god of the Nile. Verse 7, with the image of the darkening of the heavens, recalls the ninth plague of Egypt (Exodus 10:21) which depicts YHWH as defeating the sun-god, Amun-Ra. The eclipse of the sun signifies the end of the Pharaoh.

In verses 9-10 we see the nations trembling at the 'downfall' of mighty Egypt, and the scattering of its captive peoples 'among the nations'.

The cause of this downfall is named in verse 11. It is 'the king of Babylon'. We have already noted that the scroll as we have it includes later 'clarifications' of Ezekiel's oracles made by Ezekiel himself or by the Ezekiel School as they discovered deeper meanings in YHWH's word in the light of historical events. In this light the supplementary material here in verses 11-15 may have been composed after Nebuchadrezzar's Egyptian campaign of 568.

The effect of destroying all Egypt's livestock and removing its inhabitants (verse 14), making 'the land of Egypt desolate' (verse 15), is to restore its waters to their undisturbed paradise-like state. In all this 'they shall know that I am YHWH' (verse 15).

⁹I will trouble the hearts of many peoples, as I carry you captive among the nations, into countries you have not known. ¹⁰I will make many peoples appalled at you; their kings shall shudder because of you. When I brandish my sword before them, they shall tremble every moment for their lives, each one of them, on the day of your downfall.

¹¹For thus says the Lord YHWH: The sword of the king of Babylon shall come against you. ¹²I will cause your hordes to fall by the swords of mighty ones, all of them most terrible among the nations. They shall bring to ruin the pride of Egypt, and all its boastful display will be destroyed. ¹³I will destroy all its livestock from beside abundant waters; and no human foot shall trouble them any more, nor shall the hoofs of cattle trouble them. ¹⁴Then I will make their waters clear, and cause their streams to run like oil, says the Lord YHWH ¹⁵When I make the land of Egypt desolate and when the land is stripped of all that fills it, when I strike down all who live in it, then they shall know that I am YHWH.

¹⁶This is a lamentation; it shall be chanted. The women of the nations shall chant it. Over Egypt and all its boastful display they shall chant it, says the Lord YHWH.

¹⁷In the twelfth year, on the fifteenth day of the month, the word of YHWH came to me:

¹⁸Son of man, wail over the pomp of Egypt, and send it down, with the daughters of majestic nations, to the world below, with those who go down to the Pit.

¹⁹“Whom do you surpass in beauty? Go down! Be laid to rest with the uncircumcised!” ²⁰They shall fall among those who are killed by the sword. Egypt has been handed over to the sword; carry away both it and its pomp. ²¹The mighty heroes shall speak of them, with their helpers, out of the midst of Sheol: “They have come down, they lie still, the uncircumcised, killed by the sword.

²²Assyria is there, and all its company, their graves all around it, all of them killed, fallen by the sword. ²³Their graves are set in the uttermost parts of the Pit. Its company is all around its grave, all of them killed, fallen by the sword, who spread terror in the land of the living.

²⁴Elam is there, and all its pomp around its grave; all of them killed, fallen by the sword, who went down uncircumcised into the world below, who spread terror in the land of the living. They bear their shame with those who go down to the Pit. ²⁵They have made Elam a bed among the slain with all its pomp, their graves all around it, all of them uncircumcised, killed by the sword; for terror of them was spread in the land of the living, and they bear their shame with those who go down to the Pit; they are placed among the slain.

The final unit (32:17-32) is dated sometime in the year 585 (no month is given in the Hebrew text), over a year after the destruction of Jerusalem and the second deportation to Babylon. Ezekiel is to announce YHWH's will to cast Egypt down into the underworld, where its 'pomp' (its boastful display of wealth and power) will be finally brought low. Egypt will join other mighty nations that have gone there before her (compare Isaiah 14:9-11).

Egypt has boasted of her 'beauty' (compare the noble tree in chapter 31). Her funeral if it is to come should display her glory. No so! Her's will be a dishonourable burial 'with the uncircumcised' (verse 19) – that is to say, with the ritually unclean. In the underworld, Egypt will be in everlasting disgrace. Egypt will not be welcomed among the 'mighty heroes', of Sheol, who will speak of Egypt's dishonourable end.

Assyria (verses 22-24) is the first of three great nations whose dishonourable end Egypt will share. Like Egypt, Assyria's disgrace in Sheol is punishment because she 'spread terror in the land of the living' (verse 23; see verses 24, 26 and 32).

Prior to Assyria Elam (verses 24-25), which occupied the southwest part of the Iranian plateau, and had its capital in Susa, was the dominant power in the East. It, too, 'spread terror in the land of the living'. Egypt will share its dishonourable fate.

Meshech and Tubal (verse 26) designate the area north of Syria. Assyria struggled against the warring Cimmerians and Scythians who attacked from the north, but they did not trouble Nebuchadrezzar. They too in their time ‘spread terror in the land of the living’, and so they share the disgrace of Elam and Assyria. Egypt will join them.

By contrast the warriors of the heroic age were buried in honour (verse 17). In the land of the living people were in awe of the might of these heroes, but, unlike Assyria, Elam, Meshech-Tubal (and Egypt), they did not spread terror.

In verse 28 Egypt is warned again of the fate awaiting her.

In verse 29 we leave the Mesopotamian region and the focus is on Palestine. The words concerning Edom are a good example of a later ‘updating’ when post-exilic Judah had to deal with Edom which now shared its southern border.

Verse 30 is also concerned with post-exilic Judah’s northern boundary, with special reference to the Phoenicians (‘Sidonians’).

Typically, the lament includes some ‘consolation’(verse 31). Pharaoh will receive some comfort from the fact that he is not alone in his disgrace.

Ezekiel’s key point is that the great powers of the past were brought low by YHWH. This will happen, too, to the current power, Egypt, that thinks it can stand against YHWH’s will to punish and bring to repentance through the instrumentality of Babylon.

²⁶Meshech and Tubal are there, and all their pomp, their graves all around them, all of them uncircumcised, killed by the sword; for they spread terror in the land of the living.

²⁷And they do not lie with the fallen warriors of long ago who went down to Sheol with their weapons of war, whose swords were laid under their heads, and whose shields are upon their bones; for the terror of the warriors was in the land of the living. ²⁸So you shall be broken and lie among the uncircumcised, with those who are killed by the sword.

²⁹Edom is there, its kings and all its princes, who for all their might are laid with those who are killed by the sword; they lie with the uncircumcised, with those who go down to the Pit.

³⁰The princes of the north are there, all of them, and all the Sidonians, who have gone down in shame with the slain, for all the terror that they caused by their might; they lie uncircumcised with those who are killed by the sword, and bear their shame with those who go down to the Pit.

³¹When Pharaoh sees them, he will be consoled for all his pomp—Pharaoh and all his army, killed by the sword, says the Lord YHWH. ³²For he spread terror in the land of the living; therefore he shall be laid to rest among the uncircumcised, with those who are slain by the sword—Pharaoh and all his multitude, says the Lord YHWH.

