Ezekiel 19

Lament for the Princes: Lions Caged, a Vine Burned

OBSERVATION · INTERPRETATION · APPLICATION

"These were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so."
Acts 17:11

CHAPTER THEME

God has Ezekiel sing a funeral song over the kings of Judah while one of them is still on the throne. The lions learned to devour, and the nations caged them. The vine was rich and tall, and fire from its own branch burned it down. When leaders reject God's Word, the nation they lead pays for it — and the only thing left to do is weep.

Ed Smith · Started 20 October 2026

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00 The Text

EZEKIEL 19 (KJV), MARKED

Gold God — His character & actions
Green Command / instruction
Sky Key repeated word
Rose Sin / warning
Violet Promise / blessing
Amber Time / place / contrast

[1] Moreover take thou up a lamentation for the princes of Israel,

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

[13] And now she is planted in the wilderness, in a dry and thirsty ground.

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

Marked in the text

- **v1** lamentation *(every occurrence)*
- **v1** princes of Israel
- **v2** a lioness
- **v3** learned to catch the prey *(every occurrence)*
- **v3** it devoured men
- **v4** he was taken in their pit *(every occurrence)*
- **v4** the land of Egypt
- **v5** her hope was lost
- **v7** he laid waste their cities
- **v8** spread their net over him
- **v9** brought him to the king of Babylon
- **v9** no more be heard upon the mountains of Israel
- **v10** like a vine
- **v10** planted by the waters

- **v11** ⇄ strong rod *(every occurrence)*
- **v11** ★ the sceptres of them that bare rule
- **v12** ▲ plucked up in fury
- **v12** ⚠ the east wind dried up her fruit
- **v12** ⚠ the fire consumed them
- **v13** ◷ planted in the wilderness
- **v14** ⚠ fire is gone out of a rod of her branches
- **v14** ⚠ to be a sceptre to rule

Marks are drawn on the KJV text. Quotations in the notes are from the NASB95, so their wording may differ from the KJV above.

01 Observation

WHAT DOES THE TEXT SAY?

KEY VERSE · EZEKIEL 19:12 (KJV)

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

Setting

Ezekiel is among the exiles in Babylon, taken there with King Jehoiachin in 597 B.C. This chapter carries no date of its own; it sits between the oracles dated to the sixth year of the exile (8:1) and the seventh (20:1), so about 592–591 B.C. Jerusalem is still standing, Zedekiah is on the throne, and the people at home and in exile still hope the house of David will rise again. God tells Ezekiel to sing a funeral song instead.

Structure

- v1 — **the assignment:** "take up a lamentation for the princes of Israel" (v1).
- vv2–4 — **the lioness and her first cub:** "What was your mother? A lioness among lions!" (v2). "She reared her cubs" (v2); one grows up, "And he learned to tear his prey; He devoured men" (v3). "Then nations heard about him" (v4); "He was captured in their pit, And they brought him with hooks To the land of Egypt" (v4).
- vv5–9 — **the second cub:** when she saw "That her hope was lost" (v5), "She took another of her cubs And made him a young lion" (v5). "He destroyed their fortified towers And laid waste their cities" (v7) "Because of the sound of his roaring" (v7). The nations "spread their net over him; He was captured in their pit" (v8). "They put him in a cage with hooks And brought him to the king of Babylon" (v9), so that "his voice would be heard no more On the mountains of Israel" (v9).
- vv10–11 — **the mother as a vine:** "like a vine in your vineyard, Planted by the waters" (v10). "It was fruitful and full of branches Because of abundant waters" (v10), with "strong branches fit for scepters of rulers" (v11); "its height was raised above the clouds" (v11).
- vv12–14 — **the vine uprooted:** "it was plucked up in fury; It was cast down to the ground" (v12), and "the east wind dried up its fruit" (v12). "Its strong branch was torn off So that it withered; The fire consumed it" (v12). "And now it is planted in the wilderness, In a dry and thirsty land" (v13). "And fire

has gone out from its branch" (v14), so that "there is not in it a strong branch, A scepter to rule" (v14). "This is a lamentation, and has become a lamentation" (v14).

Repeated words

lamentation (vv1, 14); lion / lions (vv2, 3, 5, 6); cubs (vv2, 3, 5); tear his prey; devoured men (vv3, 6); nations (vv4, 8); captured in their pit (vv4, 8); hooks (vv4, 9); waters (v10); branch / branches (vv10, 11, 12, 14); scepter(s) (vv11, 14); fruit / fruitful (vv10, 12, 14); fire (vv12, 14); consumed (vv12, 14).

Contrasts

a lioness among lions (v2) ⟷ cubs caught in a pit and caged (vv4, 8–9). A roar that terrified the land (v7) ⟷ a voice heard no more on the mountains of Israel (v9). A vine planted by abundant waters (v10) ⟷ a vine planted in a dry and thirsty land (v13). Branches fit for scepters (v11) ⟷ not one strong branch left to rule (v14). The east wind from outside (v12) ⟷ the fire that went out from its own branch (v14).

Chapter theme (my words)

God has Ezekiel sing a funeral song over the kings of Judah while one of them is still on the throne. The lions learned to devour, and the nations caged them. The vine was rich and tall, and fire from its own branch burned it down. When leaders reject God's Word, the nation they lead pays for it — and the only thing left to do is weep.

02 Interpretation

WHAT DOES THE TEXT MEAN?

KEY VERSE · EZEKIEL 19:1 (KJV)

[1]Moreover take thou up a lamentation for the princes of Israel,

A funeral song (v1)

The word "lamentation" (*qinah*) is a dirge, the song mourners sang over the dead. Guzik calls the chapter "the collection of two laments" and notes that it imitates a funeral dirge. Alexander, quoted in Guzik: "Ezekiel expressed the Lord's sadness over the Judean leadership's failure by chanting this elegy." The "princes of Israel" are Judah's last kings, the heirs of David. The startling thing is that the funeral is sung before the burial: Zedekiah still sits in Jerusalem, and many still expect him to throw off Babylon. Ezekiel 17 already warned that his rebellion would fail.

The lioness (v2)

The lion was Judah's emblem from the start: "Judah is a lion's whelp" (Gen 49:9). Guzik: "The lioness is best understood as Israel or Jerusalem itself." Some commentators read her more narrowly as a queen mother — Hamutal, the mother of both Jehoahaz and Zedekiah (2 Kgs 23:31; 24:18) — but the vine picture in vv10–14 fits best with the nation, or the royal house as a whole.

The first cub: Jehoahaz (vv3–4)

Guzik: "This refers to Jehoahaz, the son of King Josiah (also called Shallum in Jeremiah 22:10-12)." After Josiah died at Megiddo in 609 B.C., the people made Jehoahaz king. He reigned three months and "did evil in the sight of the LORD" before Pharaoh Neco took him to Egypt, where he died (2 Kgs 23:31–34). He "learned to tear his prey" — the language of a king who used his power to devour his own people instead of shepherding them (compare Ezek 22:25). The nations caught him the way hunters caught lions — with a pit, hooks and chains.

The second cub (vv5–9)

When the mother's "hope was lost," she raised another. Guzik: "This was King Jehoiachin of Judah, who reigned for three months before being exiled to Babylon" — taken in 597 B.C. with Ezekiel himself among the captives (2 Kgs 24:8–15). Some interpreters prefer Jehoiakim, who was bound for Babylon (2 Chr 36:6), or Zedekiah; but "brought him to the king of Babylon" (v9) fits Jehoiachin, and Guzik keeps Zedekiah for the vine section. The second lion was as cruel as the first: fortified towers destroyed, cities laid waste, the land "appalled" at his roar. Wiersbe, in Guzik: "these two kings of Judah thought themselves to be great leaders, but they ignored the Word of God." His roar was silenced; his "voice would be heard no more On the mountains of Israel."

The vine in its glory (vv10–11)

The picture shifts. Israel as God's vine is a familiar image (Ps 80:8–16; Isa 5:1–7; Ezek 15; 17). Guzik says the imagery recalls Israel's most glorious years under David and Solomon — well-watered, fruitful, with "strong branches fit for scepters of rulers." The royal line was meant to provide rulers, and it did.

The vine plucked up (vv12–13)

"Plucked up in fury" — this is God's anger at covenant-breaking. The east wind, the hot desert wind, is Babylon (compare 17:10). The vine is replanted "in the wilderness, In a dry and thirsty land." Guzik notes that Babylon was not a literal wilderness — it was rich, irrigated land — but it was a wilderness to the exiles.

Fire from its own branch (v14)

The deepest sorrow is here. Guzik: "This particular rod of her branches represents Zedekiah, who was king at the destruction of Jerusalem in 587 B.C." And: "The worst damage to the vine came from one of her own branches." Zedekiah broke his oath to Nebuchadnezzar (17:15–19; 2 Kgs 24:20), and his rebellion brought the siege that burned Jerusalem. After him there was "not in it a strong branch, A scepter to rule." The Davidic throne fell empty — until the One "whose right it is" comes (21:27; Gen 49:10). The last line is a refrain: what Ezekiel sings as prophecy will be sung as history. Wiersbe, in Guzik: "Had the nation of Israel obeyed the Lord, it would have become and remained a mighty lion and a fruitful vine."

Word study (Hebrew)

- **lamentation — *qinah* (H7015):** a dirge, funeral song.
- **princes — *nasi* (H5387):** one lifted up; a leader, prince.
- **lioness — *labi* (H3833):** a lion, lioness.
- **lion — *ari* (H738):** a lion.

- **young lion — *kephir* (H3715):** a young lion in full strength.
- **cubs — *gur* (H1482):** a whelp, cub.
- **prey — *tereph* (H2964):** prey, torn food.
- **pit — *shachath* (H7845):** a pit, trap; also corruption.
- **hooks — *chach* (H2397):** a hook or ring through the nose or jaw.
- **hope — *tiqvah* (H8615):** a cord; expectation, hope.
- **net — *resheth* (H7568):** a net for catching game.
- **cage — *sugar* (H5474):** a cage, enclosure.
- **vine — *gephen* (H1612):** a vine.
- **branch — *matteh* (H4294):** a rod, staff, branch; also a tribe.
- **scepter — *shebet* (H7626):** a rod, scepter; also a tribe.
- **plucked up — *nathash* (H5428):** to pull up, uproot.
- **fury — *chemah* (H2534):** heat, rage, wrath.

Cross-references

Gen 49:9–10; 2 Kgs 23:31–34; 2 Kgs 24:8–20; 2 Kgs 25:1–7; 2 Chr 36:1–13; Ps 80:8–16; Isa 5:1–7; Jer 22:10–12; Jer 22:24–30; Ezek 15:1–8; Ezek 17:1–24; Ezek 21:25–27; Hos 10:1; John 15:1–6; Rev 5:5.

03 Application

HOW DOES IT CHANGE ME?

KEY VERSE · EZEKIEL 19:10 (KJV)

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

Command to obey — "take up a lamentation."

God told Ezekiel to weep over the leaders, not mock them or shrug. When I see a man wreck his life — a father, a pastor, a friend, a man I've walked with who went back out — I'm called to grieve before God, not gossip. A lament is honest about sin and still full of love.

Sin to confess — learning to devour

Both cubs "learned to tear" their prey. Nobody is born a predator; it's learned, one choice at a time. I'll confess where I've used strength, words or position to take from people instead of serve them. Many of the men I disciple learned to devour on the street or in the yard just to survive. The good news is that what was learned can be unlearned in Christ.

Warning to heed — fire from my own branch

The worst damage didn't come from Babylon; it came from inside the vine (v14). My biggest threat isn't the world out there; it's the pride, lust and stubbornness in here. For a man in recovery, the relapse rarely starts with the bottle — it starts with a rebellion in the heart he thought he could manage.

Promise to trust — the Lion of Judah

Ezekiel's song ends with no scepter left. But God's promise did not die: "The scepter shall not depart from Judah" (Gen 49:10). The throne waited for Jesus — "the Lion that is from the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has overcome" (Rev 5:5). For the man who thinks his family line is cursed and his hope is lost (v5), the true King has come, and He doesn't devour; He lays down His life.

Example to follow — stay connected to the Vine

Judah was planted by abundant waters and still burned. Jesus said, "I am the vine, you are the branches" and "apart from Me you can do nothing" (John 15:5). My fruitfulness in writing, in building study tools, in discipling men, comes from abiding in Him, not from my own strength.

Worship

God is just: He plucks up in fury what rebels against Him. God is faithful: He kept a scepter for Judah through fire and exile and gave it to His Son. I worship the Lion who is also the Lamb.

Prayer

Lord God, give me a heart that weeps over sin instead of shrugging at it. Root out the fire in my own branches before it burns what You have planted. Keep me abiding in Jesus, the true Vine and the true King. And for the men who feel caged and silenced, let them hear the roar of the Lion of Judah who has overcome. Amen.