

## Handout: Ezekiel Lesson 7

Chapter 19 is a poetic lament for the princes of Israel, especially the last Davidic prince, Zedekiah. It is also a political allegory concerning Judah and the last of her Davidic kings, using the symbolic imagery of lions and a lion hunt. The lament appears to refer to four historical events:

1. In 609 BC, the Egyptian Pharaoh Necho II deposed Davidic King Jehoahaz, exiled him to Egypt, and made his half-brother Eliakim, who he renamed Jehoiakim, King of Judah.
2. In 598 BC, the Babylonian general, Nebuchadnezzar, deposed Jehoiakim's son Jehoiachin, exiled him to Babylon, and made his uncle Mattaniah, who he renamed Zedekiah, King of Judah.
3. King Zedekiah revolted against the Babylonians in c. 592 BC. The Babylonians and their allies besieged Jerusalem, captured Zedekiah, and destroyed Jerusalem.
4. The Babylonians took Zedekiah and the survivors of the nation of Judah into exile in Babylon in 587 BC.

Chapter 19 divides into two parts with each part beginning with the introduction "your mother" (verses 2 and 10) and with the symbolic imagery changing from a lioness in the first section to a vine in the second. The first section also subdivides into two parts:

- Part I ~ The Lioness and Her Cubs (verses 5-9)
  - A. The First Cub (verses 2-4).
  - B. The Second Cub (verses 5-9)
- Part II ~ The Vine and Her Branches (verses 10-14)

The theme of Chapter 20 is, despite Yahweh's gracious efforts on their behalf, the Israelites "rebelled against me," (repeated in verses 8, 13, and 21), and they deserved His Divine Judgment. The word judge/judgment appears twelve times (20:4 twice, 11, 13, 15, 18, 19, 21, 24, 35, 36 twice). The oracle begins with a date formula and the arrival of some elders to consult Yahweh. The formula "The Lord Yahweh says" (repeated in 20:3, 5, 27, 30, 39) begins a recounting of Israel's early rebellious history presented three sections:

1. The Israelites of Egyptian experience (verses 5-26)
2. The Israelites after the conquest of the land (verses 27-39)
3. The promise of a future restoration (verses 40-44)

The first section is in three stages framed by Yahweh making Himself known to the children of Israel as their God (verses 1-26):

1. The slave generation
2. The emancipated slave generation in the wilderness
3. The descendants of the slave generation

Chapter 20:8-13 ~ From the beginning of their relationship with Yahweh, the Israelites:

1. They rebelled against Yahweh and would not listen to His prophet Moses.
2. They refused to give up pagan idols.

They added to their offenses after the Sinai Covenant:

1. They refused to keep His laws.

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2. They scorned His judgments.
3. They profaned His Sabbaths.

Chapter 21 contains three oracles that begin with the phrase “The word of Yahweh was addressed to me as follows.” The oracles describe Yahweh’s sword of judgment unsheathed. The word “sword” links all three oracles (repeated fifteen times in 21:8, 9, 10, 14 twice, 16, 17, 19 three times, 20, 24, 25, 33 twice).

- Oracle #1: Yahweh unsheathes His sword against the land and the people (verses 1-12).
- Oracle #2: The sword placed in the hands of the Babylonians against the people and their leaders (verses 13-22).
- Oracle #3: The sword of the King of Babylon against Prince Zedekiah and the Ammonites (verses 23-37).

Three important theological points come together in these oracles:

1. God becomes the enemy of those who claim to be His people but refuse to accept the responsibilities associated with the privileges.
2. God is faithful to His divine word. The faithfulness of His word applies not only to His promises of blessings but also to His warnings of judgment.
3. God’s is not bound by human agendas, and He will use whoever He desires, even a pagan King, to fulfill His Divine Plan.

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