–Save This Page as a PDF–

Pharaoh as a Felled Cedar of Lebanon
Ezeki'el 31: 1-18

Pharaoh as a felled cedar of Lebanon DIG: Who does YHVH tell Pharaoh to consider? To what does ADONAI compare His country? How does Ha'Shem describe it? What was the sin of the cedar? How was it punished? By whom (30:10-11)? What will be the impact on the other trees? What lesson does the LORD want Pharaoh to learn from this allegory of the cedar tree?

REFLECT: Has God ever acted in blessing or judgment in the life of someone you know? What did you learn from that experience? Can you really learn from other people's mistakes, or must you make your own? Everyone can't have it "made in the shade." Is it always true that for one person to have abundance, others must have less? If the world were a forest, how much of the water would you say you get? How much does your nation take? How does ADONAI measure success? In what area of your life do you feel like you are "branching out?"

This prophecy was given in Sivan, 587 BC, one year before the destruction of Jerusalem at the end of Zedekiah's reign. However, the prophecy wasn't fulfilled until sixteen years later in 571 BC.

The reflection of Assyria is held up to Egypt as an example of divine punishment for self-examination and arrogance. Mighty Assyria, the powerful conqueror of numerous nations, was no more. A similar fate will happen to Egypt, the mistress of many peoples. Only at the beginning and the end of the chapter is Pharaoh, the representative of Egypt, specifically mentioned; the middle section deals with the eminence and subsequent decline of Assyria as the example of Egypt's doom.

Ezeki'el's fourth prophecy against Egypt came **in the eleventh year of Ezeki'el's captivity, in the third month of Sivan (May-June) 587 BC on the first day, about fifteen months before the fall of Jerusalem, the word of the LORD came to me,** saying: **Son of man, say to Pharaoh king of Egypt and to his multitudes** (the people in general and probably the army in particular)**: Who can be compared with you in majesty? Consider Assyria, once a cedar in Lebanon, with beautiful branches overshadowing the forest; it towered on high, its top above the thick foliage for providing shade (Ezeki'el 31:1-3). As the cedar is taller than any other tree in Lebanon, so was Assyria the mightiest people at one time. Therefore, the greatness, the might and the power of the Assyrian empire are emphasized.**

The waters nourished it, deep springs made it grow tall; their streams flowed all around its base and sent their channels to all the trees of the field. The deep rivers not only supplied the great rivers for the cedar, but also filled the smaller canals that nourished the other trees. Assyria received a continuous supply of nourishment from the deep as compared with the other nations. This thought is elaborated in the next verse. Therefore, it towered higher than all the trees of the field; its boughs increased and its branches grew long, spreading because of abundant waters (Ezeki'el 31:4-5). Assyria had all the natural resources **it** needed to build up **its** tremendous army. **She** was superior to all the other nations and seemed to be unbeatable.

Assyria also had tremendous influence and control over all the other nations. **All the birds of the air nestled in its boughs, all the beasts of the field give birth under its branches; all the great nations lived in its shade. These are figures for the people who passed under Assyrian domination.** In

summation, **Assyria was** like **a** great **cedar, majestic in beauty, with its spreading boughs or widespread conquests, for its roots went down to abundant waters (Ezeki'el 31:6-7).**

Then the uniqueness of the glory of **Assyria** is highlighted. **The cedars in the garden of God, or the world, could not rival it, nor could the pine trees equal its boughs, nor could the pine trees compare with its branches – no tree in the garden of God could match its beauty. But the supreme position held by Assyria was the work of God. I made it beautiful with abundant branches, the envy of all the trees in Eden in the garden of God (Ezeki'el 31:8-9).** One of the reasons **the Ruach ha-Kodesh** connects, Eden, **the garden of God,** with **Assyria** is that Eden was in the territory that later became **Assyria (Genesis 2** and **3)**.[330]

Assyria's descent into sh'ol: Therefore, because of what follows, the sin of pride, **this is what Adonai ELOHIM** says: **Because it towered on high, lifting its top above the thick foliage, and because it was proud of its height, I** brought **Assyria** down and **handed it over to the ruler of the nations** (Nebuchadnezzar)**, for him to deal with according to** the degree of **its wickedness.** The Babylonians destroyed **Assyria**, and the same one who brought **Assyria** down will bring Egypt down. **I cast it aside (Ezeki'el 31:10-11), and the most ruthless of foreign nations** (Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonians) **cut it down and left it** to exist no more**.**

The Assyrian Empire was totally destroyed and as a result of **her judgment, all the** other **nations** learned the lesson of not exalting **themselves** in **their pride** to bring about the same kind of judgment that **Assyria** suffered. But that cannot be said about **Egypt** because she did follow **Assyria** in **her** pride and **Egypt** will suffer at the hand of the same destroyers, the Babylonians. **Its boughs fell on the mountains and in the valleys; its branches lay broken in all the ravines of the land. All the nations of the earth came out from under its shade and left it. All the birds of the air settled on the fallen tree, and all the beasts of the field were among its branches. The dead of Assyria will become food for birds and beasts of prey. To that end, the fall of Assyria should act as a warning to the other nations who may be tempted to follow her example. Therefore no other trees by the waters are ever to tower proudly on high, lifting their tops above the thick foliage. They, too, can be cut down and abandoned, so let them not be proud or overconfident. No other trees so well-watered are ever to reach such a height (Ezeki'el 31:12-14a):**

So **Egypt**, like **Assyria,** is **destined for death, for the earth below, among human beings, with those who go down to the pit, sh'ol the abode of the dead (Ezeki'el 31:14b).** Here the emphasis is on the physical and spiritual death of **Egypt**.

Assyria's fall as a warning to Egypt: Here is what Adonai ELOHIM says: **The collapse of Assyria will cause a great deal of upheaval in the world and fill it with dismay. In figurative language, even the deep is plunged into mourning. On the day Assyria descended to Sh'ol, I caused the abyss to mourn and cover itself for her. I held back its rivers, so that its deep waters were stopped.** The mourning was so great that it was as if the whole universe suddenly stood still. The **streams that flowed all around its base and sent their channels to all the trees of the field are now dried up. I made Lebanon mourn for him, and all the field trees, the other important nations at that time, were overcome by fear for their own safety because of him (Ezeki'el 31:15 CJB).**

At the sound of her fall I made the nations that were involved with **Assyria** either politically or economically **shake, when I hurled it down to Sh'ol with those who descended to the pit.** If **Assyria** could **fall** what future could they possibly have? **All the trees of Eden, the choicest and best of Lebanon, all the trees that were well-watered, that depended upon her for life, were consoled** by the fall of **Assyria in** death **below the earth (Ezeki'el 31:16). The sight of Assyria joining their company comforts the nations whose glory and power lay in the past.**

The other nations descended with Assyria to sh'ol, to those who had already died, **were killed by the sword,** and were there to greet **Assyria** and **her fighting arm** (**her** army) **those among the nations who lived in her shade (Ezeki'el 31:17).**

For seventeen verses **YHVH** had been dealing with **Assyria** in the motif of a giant **cedar tree**, **He** now applies all these lessons to **Egypt**. **After describing the eminence and decline of Assyria, the prophet reverts to his theme of verse 2. If the giant cedar, Assyria, can be cut down, could Egypt hope to escape? Which of the trees of Eden was your equal in glory or size? Egypt** was like **Assyria** in two ways. **She** was like **Assyria** in **her** greatness and like **Assyria** in **her fall**. **Yet you will be brought down below the earth along with the trees of Eden. You will lie there among the uncircumcised,** which

was considered a very demeaning and degrading death, **with those killed by the sword. This is Pharaoh Hophra and all his multitudes (Ezeki’el 31:18). The concluding words indicate that the oracle of the chapter is ultimately directed at Egypt.**[331]

It requires no special powers of discernment to realize in reading **the Ruach Ha’Kodesh’s** indictment against **Egypt** that **ADONAI** is unalterably opposed to the pride of mankind. **God** will not tolerate any of its numerous ramifications, for **He** loves humility. Let us ask **YHVH** to humble us under **His** mighty hand so that **He** might lift us up when our time comes.[332]