

Haftarat Va'eira נאָרען
Torah: Exodus 6:2–9:35
Haftarah: Ezekiel 28:25–29:21

GENERAL OVERVIEW

This haftarah consists primarily of a prophecy by Ezekiel against Egypt. In actuality, this prophecy of judgment will continue for several more chapters. Overall, this passage fits into the general context of Ezekiel prophesying against all of the nations that surrounded Judah. Previous to this chapter, is a word against Tyre. Now, Ezekiel proceeds to speaking God's message to Egypt. The transition is skilfully accomplished by noting Babylon's fruitless victory over Tyre. The victory was hard won and the rewards for it were not commensurate with the amount of work it took to win. However, the Lord says that He would give Babylon Egypt as a prize, with plenty of riches to go around.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Knowledge of the historical background to this section of Ezekiel is essential to a correct understanding of this passage. Ezekiel is one of the few prophets to carefully date his prophecies. Because of this we are able to know almost precisely when many of his prophecies were spoken. Ralph Alexander, commentator for *The Expositor's Bible Commentary* provides the following chronological chart of the main historical events that have some bearing on the contents of this Haftarah.¹ Each entry contains 1) the event, 2) the date (BCE), and 3) the Biblical reference(s).

1. Second Siege of Jerusalem

2 Kings 25:1; Ezekiel 24:1 | December / January — 589, 588 BCE

2. Pharaoh Hophra Interrupts the Siege of Jerusalem

Jeremiah 37:5–11 | 12 months — 588

3. Ezekiel's Prophecy against Egypt

Ezekiel 29:1–16 (Our Haftarah) | December / January 588, 587

4. Babylonians Defeat Egypt (Hophra)

Ezekiel 30:20–26 | March / April — 587

5. Egypt's Fall Compared to Assyria's Fall

Ezekiel 31:1–18 | May / June — 587

6. Siege of Jerusalem in Progress

Jeremiah 32:1–5 | 13 months — 587

7. End of Zedekiah's Reign

2 Kings 25:7 | June / July — 586

Egypt played an important role during this critical time in Judah's history. As Babylon was rising in power, it was Egypt that allied with fledging Assyria in hopes to stop the rise of a new Mesopotamian super-power — Babylon. But Judah's godly King Josiah led the Judean army against Pharaoh Necho's Egyptian forces at Megiddo on their way to join the Assyrians. He was killed in action, hit by an archer just as the main battle was beginning. Thus, the attempt to thwart the Egyptians failed.

Consequently, Egypt dominated Judah from 695 to 605 BCE. This domination ceased when the Babylonians soundly defeated the Egyptians at Charcarnesh in 605 BCE. However, from time-to-time, Egypt attempted to dislodge Babylon's grip over Judah. However, these attempts were not

¹ Frank E. Gaebelin, *Expositor's Bible Commentary* ("EBC"), vol. 6, 888. This chart was modified slightly by us.

for the sake of Judah; they were merely because Egypt desired to dominate Judah. The Holy One of Israel was ever so mindful of the trouble Egypt had made for Judah. Accordingly, He sent Ezekiel to prophesy against the Egyptians. The beginning of that prophecy is our present haftarah.

CONNECTION TO THE PARASHA

Parashat Va'eira is the Torah portion that tells the story of Moshe and Aaron's pleas to Pharaoh to let the people of Israel leave Egypt. Consequently, the Torah portion also tells the story of the subsequent ten plagues with which God afflicted Egypt for their cruelty to the people of Israel. In like manner, our haftarah relates the prophecies announcing Egypt's doom for her ill treatment of the covenant people of God.

EXPOSITION

Five times throughout this haftarah we find repeated, like a chorus in a song, the phrase, "Then they will know that I am the Lord." Thus, this commentary has been developed around those phrases. By doing so we have approached the haftarah from God's standpoint. In essence, this commentary seeks to answer the question, "What will people have to experience in order that they will know that God is the Lord?"

This passage, however, has a little confusing aspect to it. The confusion is concerning the antecedent for "they." Does "they" refer to Israel, Egypt, both Israel and Egypt, or does it refer to others? We will attempt to answer that question in the commentary. The study outline is as follows:

God Will Be Known Through . . .

- I. Israel's Return
- II. Egypt's Demise
- III. Egypt's Desolation
- IV. Egypt's Reversal of Fortune
- V. Fulfilled Prophecy

I. GOD WILL BE KNOWN THROUGH ISRAEL'S RETURN

In the previous chapters, Ezekiel predicted destruction and judgement to the nations that surrounded Israel and Judah. These were the peoples who at various times in Israel's history had a hand in Israel's demise. At one time or another, they oppressed Israel, tempted Israel with their gods, or mocked Israel's downfall. It would have been easy for the people of Judah living in exile with Ezekiel in Babylon to lose hope in their God altogether for their situation and their suffering. In order to encourage them, therefore, Ezekiel systematically drew a circle around the Land of Israel, named their neighbours, and pronounced God's judgement upon each one, one at a time.

However, the downfall of Israel's enemies was only part of what God would do to encourage the downcast of Israel. Not only would He destroy those who took part in helping to destroy Israel and Judah, but He would also do something that none of Israel's enemies ever dreamed He would do — God would restore the fortunes of His people Israel. Let us look at some of the details that Ezekiel provides for us concerning this restoration.

A. Re-gathering

The first thing Ezekiel tells us in 28:25 is that God will re-gather His people, both houses of Israel. This must have filled the exiles living with Ezekiel with an abundance of hope. With this promise, they would have realized that God had not forgotten them. They will not be left standing in the cold, living among strangers. Furthermore, the Holy One promised that in doing so, God will sanctify Himself among them, especially in the sight of all of the nations where they have been scattered. This idea is expressed by the perfect tense of the familiar Hebrew verb,

(*nikdashti*, נִקְדַּשְׁתוּ). God would not let them become Babylonians, Assyrians, or anything else. There is yet a homeland for them all.

The Hebrew perfect tense stresses completed action. It is a tense that is used quite frequently among the prophets to speak of future events that are so certain it is as if they have already happened. Thus, here through Ezekiel, God told the people of Israel that what He will do for them in the sight of all of the nations is so certain to happen that the nations will regard God in a special way from that time after. God will be sanctified in their midst.

B. Restoration

Ezekiel promises, secondly, that God will not only re-gather Israel as a people from their Diaspora, but He will also restore them to their proper homeland, *Eretz Ysrael*.

Some of the early Zionists were so convinced of the immediate necessity of a homeland for the Jewish people that they were willing to accept tracts of land elsewhere besides what was then called Palestine. Some possibilities for them were Argentina and Uganda.² According to Ezekiel, however, the Holy One would not let that happen. In Ezekiel 28:25, God specifically states that He would restore the dispersed exiles of Israel to the “land which I gave to My Servant Jacob.”

C. Rejuvenation

The last promise God gave to the downcast Judean exiles was that after re-gathering them, and restoring their land for them, He would rejuvenate their land. Ezekiel told them in 28:26 that they would come back and “they will live in it securely, and they will build houses, plant vineyards, and live securely.”

Notice that God mentioned "security" twice. It was not enough for the exiles to hear the news about returning to their land only to think about some terrible foe taking them captive from it again. Knowing their need for assurance, the Lord, therefore, assured them they would raise their families, build the houses, and plant their vineyards — amidst security, freedom from all external danger.

Many, including some of us who live in the Land of Israel today, often think that the present re-gathering of the Jewish people to this Land is the fulfilment of promises such as Ezekiel 28:25-26. However, if we carefully examine specifically what is written, we will discover that the promises of God do not yet completely match the present reality of the people in the Land (as of the date of this editing February 2025). Indeed, a continual flow of returnees are coming home from the Diaspora. Moreover, the Land is experiencing much the kind of rejuvenation about which Ezekiel speaks in 28:26. But sadly, there is no freedom from external (or internal) dangers, as verse 26 emphasizes.

Thus, we can say that the present situation may be a partial fulfilment of what Ezekiel is predicting, or perhaps a forerunner of that expected fulfilment. Hence, we have to wait until the Messiah returns in order to experience the full impact of Ezekiel's promise. In the meantime, we can rest assured that the people of Ezekiel's day gained great hope from such promises as this one.

D. They Will Know

When all of the promises of 28:25–26 do come to pass, Ezekiel assures us that Israel will truly be convinced that God is the Lord. Israel has experienced a relationship with many different kinds of gods throughout her history. Very few times have they known as a national that the Lord is their God. Here, in verse 26, the prophet Ezekiel uses the personal name for God, the name God gave to Moshe that would designate which God was Israel's God.

The Canaanites had Baal, the Moabites had Molech, and the Babylonians worshipped Marduk. But Israel was called to be in a personal relationship with the Lord, (יהוה). They would know in a

². *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, vol. 16, 1044, 1046.

very intimate way (“know” in 28:26 Hebrew is a form of the word *yada*, יָדַע. He was their God because the fulfilment of those promises meant that He would be faithful to the covenants that He had made with Israel. After all, YHVH is the covenant-keeping God, as we learned in this week’s parasha.

II. GOD WILL BE KNOWN THROUGH EGYPT'S DEMISE

In chapter 29, Ezekiel returns to his plan of rebuking the enemies of Israel that surrounded her. One of the nations that historically, has been a frequent menace to the descendants of Jacob is Egypt. Accordingly, for the next several chapters Ezekiel pronounced judgement after judgment against Egypt. John B. Taylor points out that one-twelfth (1/12) of Ezekiel's book is devoted to Egypt.³ That is a lot of material. One reason for this, as Taylor explains is that Judah's existence and well-being was tied up with what was going on with Egypt.

From a human point of view, it is difficult to study the history of Judah apart from what was going on with her surrounding nations, such as Egypt. What Ezekiel pains to point out, however, (says Taylor) “was that the final say in Israel's destiny was not theirs [Egypt's] but God's — and God was Israel's God! More than that, he said that even the destiny of the great powers, such as Egypt, was in the hands of Israel's God Yahweh controlled everything.”⁴

A. A Crocodile

Ezekiel uses two images and one comparison to describe what God would do to Egypt and her arrogant pharaoh, Pharaoh Hophra. The first image is that of a crocodile. In 29:3, the NASB says that Ezekiel compares him to a “great monster.” However, the Hebrew word translated “great monster” is *tannim*, (תַּנִּים). This is a word that, “represented both the crocodile, with which the Nile was infested, and the chaos-monster of Semitic mythology.”⁵ On this note, let us examine what classic Jewish commentator Malbim explains. He says,

The ancient Egyptians believed that the Nile was holy and that the crocodiles inhabiting it possessed divine powers. One huge crocodile was believed to rule over them all, and to have created himself as well as the Nile. To this huge crocodile the prophet compared Pharaoh; for his power on the land was equivalent to that of the crocodile in the Nile.⁶

It is clear, therefore, that Ezekiel is comparing Egypt's Pharaoh Hophra to the mighty crocodile. But why would Ezekiel use such a comparison? Ancient history provides some helpful background that may answer this question. For example, the 5th century BCE Greek historian, Herodotus, informs us that Pharaoh Hophra “was so strong in his position that he felt no god could dislodge him.”⁷ During his reign over Egypt, Hophra led campaigns against the mighty King Cyrus of Persia, took Gaza, Sidon, Tyre (through a naval attack) and, “considered himself master over Palestine and Phoenicia.”⁸

(Herodotus is called “the father of modern history” because he employed, “the accounts of eyewitnesses, plus his own accounts, archaeological findings, traditions, and other written material.”⁹ Of the ancient historians, Herodotus seems to be one of the most reliable.)

Ezekiel said that God would put hooks into this “crocodile” and drag him out of the river. Then he would be abandoned in the wilderness (the *midbar*, מִדְּבָר, a desert or waste place) where he would be food for the wild animals and birds. It is interesting to note that a common way to get a

³ John B. Taylor, *Ezekiel (Tyndale Commentaries)*, 198.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ *Ibid.*, 199.

⁶ J. A. Rosenberg, *The Book of Ezekiel*, vol. 2, 249.

⁷ Alexander, *Expositor's Bible Commentary* (“EBC”), 891.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ Geoffrey W. Bromiley, *The International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia* (“ISBE”), fully revised, vol. 2, 699.

crocodile out of the water is to drag him out by a hook in his jaws and then, once brought onto dry ground he is slaughtered — just as Ezekiel describes. The "fish" that come out with this "crocodile." i.e. pharaoh, are most likely, "the people or the mercenaries or the allies of Egypt."¹⁰ Hence, by use of this first image, the prophet is predicting the downfall of this arrogant Pharaoh. When he fell, he brought all of Egypt with him.

At this point, we should notice the cleverness of the sages who compiled the haftarah. If we were attempting to choose a prophetic commentary on Parashat Va'eira, what would we choose? What makes this passage from Ezekiel such a good candidate for the haftarah? After all, there are other passages in the Prophets that speak about God's judgments on Egypt. However, the sages carefully observed that Ezekiel uses the word *tannim*, תנינים, in reference to Pharaoh. If we remember, this is also the same word that many translations render "snake" in Exodus 7. It should be translated, "crocodile," however. There, we saw that Moshe's crocodile ate up Pharaoh's crocodiles. This signified that while Egypt was, indeed, very fierce, it was no match for the power of God.

Now in Ezekiel we see this illustrated in a very vivid way. Pharaoh was, indeed, a crocodile — and a fierce one to boot. But in the end, the God of Israel will attack that crocodile with a hook, pull him up and slaughter him in judgment. Hence, this passage in Ezekiel is a most appropriate candidate for a haftarah for Parasha Va'eira.

B. A Broken Reed

Pharaoh Hophra's arrogance was not good for him, for Egypt, or for Israel. Based on their boasting and their reputation, Israel relied at least twice on the Egyptians to save and deliver them from their enemies. The first time this appeal came was against Sennacherib and the Assyrians. At that time, the Egyptians could not help. The second appeal for help is most likely the incident to which Ezekiel is alluding in 28:6–7. This second plea for help from Judah came when the Babylonians were attacking Jerusalem. The cry for help went to Pharaoh Hophra. He was able to secure a little window of time, and the Babylonians stopped the siege in 588.

However, Nebuchadnezzar in 587 BCE, soon after, defeated Pharaoh Hophra. This proud, boastful king of Egypt was then, to Israel, nothing but a weak reed. When Judah tried to lean on him, he was too weak to help. The broken reed was the second image that Ezekiel used to describe Pharaoh Hophra.

III. GOD WILL BE KNOWN THROUGH EGYPT'S DESOLATION

In Ezekiel 29:8, we are told that God was to bring upon the prideful pharaoh, "a sword, and I shall cut off from you man and beast and the land of Egypt will become a desolation and waste."

The reed broke under the pressure of the Babylonians. According to this verse, the Egyptians would learn another theological lesson. They first learned that Judah's God is the Sovereign of the universe when the power of the prideful and arrogant Pharaoh Hophra was brought low. Now, they would also learn that this same God is the one who inflicts judgment upon the nations. In their case, God would make their once beautiful and luxurious nation like a waste place.

The word translated "desolation" is from the verb *shemam*, (שָׁמַם). Sometimes this word is used to speak of a place that evokes horror from its beholders.¹¹ Egypt was once a place of splendid palaces and riches. But, out of judgment, God would make it a place where people would gasp out in horror when they looked at it.

¹⁰. Taylor, *Ezekiel*, 200.

¹¹. Brown, Driver, and Briggs, *Hebrew and English Lexicon*, 1030–1031.

The word rendered "waste" is from the Hebrew root *harev* (חרב). It is a word related to Mount Horeb, the other name for Mount Sinai. This word group suggests a place that has been totally dried up because of parching heat and drought.¹²

Most of Egypt was already in such a condition. The only watered place was along the Nile River. Perhaps Ezekiel was suggesting that even the Nile would shrink. If the Nile shrank, so also would Egypt shrink, for the lifeline of Egypt was the Nile. Thus, Ezekiel declared that because the Pharaohs even had the audacity to think that they empowered or even created the Nile, God would dry it up. The text says "from Migdol to Syene." Migdol is in the north, the delta region, and Syene {modern Aswan} is in the extreme south. This encompasses the whole length of the Nile as it goes through Egypt.

The judgment upon the Egyptians would, in fact, parallel that which was inflicted upon the Judeans. Herein is that comparison of which we previously spoke. In both cases the Holy One predicted a scattering of the population and the subsequent desolation of the land. For the people of Judea, the Diaspora was to last for seventy years while the Egyptian exile was to last for forty years.

Historically, there is nothing that we know of in either the Egyptian or Babylonian records to confirm a forty year exile of the Egyptians. However, this does not mean that it did not happen. For one thing,

Sources for Egyptian and Babylonian history of this period are sparse. In addition, kings of the ancient Near East did not normally admit failure.¹³

However, this commentator agrees with Ralph Alexander when he concludes the issue by stating,

just because there is no direct statement in ancient history concerning the dispersion does not mean that it did not occur. God's word is more valid than our conjectures or ignorance.¹⁴

In the end, according to verse 9, the Egyptians would learn yet a third lesson about the God of the Israelites. They would know that He is the Lord, the Master of the Universe — including *their* universe. They would discover that neither Pharaoh Hophra nor any other pharaoh possesses the power and authority as the one true God of the universe, the Creator of the heavens and the earth, including Egypt and the Nile.

IV. GOD WILL BE KNOWN THROUGH EGYPT'S REVERSAL OF FORTUNE

In the end, Egypt would suffer much at the hand of God. Ezekiel says that Egypt would become desolate (29:9), they would also be scattered (29:12), and they would never regain the power and glory they once had (29:14–15). After all of this, the prophet tells us in 29:16 that all of Egypt would find out who God is; they will know that God is the Lord. They would find out that the God of Israel is the One who, "makes nations great and destroys them."¹⁵ They would also discover that no matter what they attempted to do to help Israel — or to help themselves, it would not help because God was the one who raised up Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonians for His sovereign purposes, particularly to inflict judgment upon Israel.

Moreover, Egypt was destined by God to be exiled for forty years, an exile which paralleled that of Judah. Accordingly, according to Ezekiel, like Israel, Egypt was promised a return to her land. According to Rosenberg, "in the days of the king of Persia, the Egyptian exiles began to gather together and return to Egypt."¹⁶ Interestingly enough, Judah also began to return to their land under Persian rule at approximately the same time.

¹². *Ibid*, 351.

¹³. Alexander, *EBC*, 891.

¹⁴. *Ibid*.

¹⁵. Rosenberg, *The Prophets*, 250.

¹⁶. *Ibid*, 253.

However, at this point, the parallels between Israel and Egypt cease. Ezekiel predicts that although the Egyptians would return from their captivity, they would never again be the same. True, the prophet writes, "I shall turn the fortunes of Egypt, but this reversal of fortune was to be very limited. "They will be a lowly kingdom. It will be the lowest of the kingdoms; and it will never again lift itself up above the nations. And I shall make them so small that they will not rule over the nations [Ezekiel 29: 14–16]... indeed, Egypt's subsequent history has consisted of repeated conquest and humiliation. She has never been anything more than a "lowly kingdom" and it is unlikely that she will ever again enjoy the glory that once was hers.¹⁷

A. Valuable Lessons

Egypt's return in humility has at least two results, according to 29:16. The first is that Israel will have learned something; she will have learned that she cannot again attempt to rely on Egypt to come to her aid in times of trouble. This is what Judah tried to do during the Babylonian exile when she appealed to Pharaoh Hophra to assist them against Nebuchadnezzar. That attempt, though at first apparently successful, in the end, failed. This would be one of the great lessons for all future Israelites: Do not rely upon Egypt (or any other nation, for that matter!) to help against other nations.

The second valuable lesson would be for the Egyptians. As in the previous verses, the Egyptians would learn an important theological lesson. They would learn that God humbles the proud and uplifts the humble. Before they had trusted in their own might and boasted in their own accomplishments. After their humiliating exile, they would learn that God is the supreme Sovereign of the universe and that they are not!

Moreover, they would look at the people of Israel (who also had a similar exile as theirs) and see that God would exalt Israel. At the same time, He would keep Egypt lowly. True, Israel is still awaiting her exaltation. But, nonetheless, it will come, and Egypt will always remain in a lowly position. The Egyptians learned that the Lord is the God of the Israelites. This God is the one who grants, by grace, wonderful benefits to all of those who are in a covenant relationship with Him, as Israel was/is.

V. GOD WILL BE KNOWN THROUGH FULFILLED PROPHECY

In Ezekiel 29:17–21, we see the prediction of the specific events that will cause the previous prophecies to come to pass. To be specific, it was predicted that King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon was to come against the people of Tyre. To be sure, God was the one who called Nebuchadnezzar to do this. He did so to humble the people of Tyre.

Nebuchadnezzar laid siege against Tyre for thirteen years. It was a long and arduous campaign. Accordingly, Ezekiel says that "every head was rubbed bare and every shoulder made raw" (29:18). This, probably "indicates that they were carrying heavy loads on their heads and shoulders during the siege and perhaps chafing at the helmets."¹⁸

Indeed, even though the Babylonian army may have had their shoulders chafed, sadly the strenuous efforts of the Babylonians were for nothing. The people of Tyre sent the bulk of their wealth to sea (possibly at the aid of Egypt.)¹⁹ Moreover, in the end, we are not even certain whether or not the siege was successful, though according to Taylor, "A few years later Babylonian officials were in residence in the city and Babylonian suzerainty was acknowledged."²⁰

¹⁷. Taylor, *Ezekiel*, 200.

¹⁸. Alexander, *EBC*, 893.

¹⁹. *Ibid.*

²⁰. Taylor, *Ezekiel*, 201.

Yet, for all of this, the Babylonians came up dry. They did not receive the wages that were commensurate with their labour of conquering, so to speak. Since, however, it was the Lord, who called Babylon to come against Tyre, it was up to Him to pay the soldiers. Thus, according to Ezekiel, God promised that he would “give the land of Egypt to Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon. And he will carry off her wealth, and capture her spoil and seize her plunder; and it will be wages for his army; ‘I have given him the land of Egypt for his labour which he performed, because they acted for Me, ‘declares the Lord God” (Ezekiel 29:19–20).

Tyre provided insufficient booty for the hungry army of Babylon. Egypt would be their gift from God, their just wages. Why Egypt? The answer is simply because Egypt proved to be a real menace to Babylon. It was Egypt who attempted to thwart the rise of Babylon when Pharaoh Necco came against them while they were trying to ally themselves with the Assyrians. It was Egypt who tried to help the Judeans during the Babylonian siege of Jerusalem. And it was the Egyptians who came to the aid of the people of Tyre when Nebuchadnezzar laid siege for thirteen years against Tyre.

But there was something that the Egyptians did not know. They did not realize that it was the Lord God of Israel who had called Babylon to do what they did. It was God's will for Babylon to follow the Assyrians as the next ancient Near Eastern super-power. It was God's will for the Babylonians to conquer Jerusalem and to burn the Temple. And it was God's will for the Babylonians to defeat Tyre. In essence, in each instance, Egypt was going contrary to God's purposes there were being carried out through the Babylonians. Thus, according to Alexander, “One fragmentary Babylonian text from the chronicles of the Chaldean king [Nebuchadnezzar] (B.M. 33041) implies that Babylonia invaded Egypt about 568/567 B.C. This is corresponded by Josephus (*Antiquities* X, 180-82 [ix. 7]).”²¹

We know that Nebuchadnezzar was victorious because Ezekiel 29:20 indicates that God gave, “him the land of Egypt for his labour which he performed, because they acted for Me,” declares the Lord God.

B. The Final Lesson

The Haftarah concludes by stating that Israel will learn a valuable lesson from all of this. “On that day I shall make a horn sprout for the house of Israel, and I shall open your mouth in their midst. Then they will know that I am the Lord” (29:21). Admittedly, the phrase “I shall make a horn sprout for the house of Israel” is a difficult phrase to interpret. On the Jewish side of commentators, Rosenberg quotes some who indicate, “I have neither heard nor found the explanation of this verse,” although Rosenberg goes on to cite several possible interpretations.²²

The best suggestion, in our opinion, is that which was given by Rashi. According to Rashi, the “horn” is King Cyrus of Medo-Perasia. Rashi writes, “This was the blossoming of the horn for the house of Israel, for he released them from exile and settled them in their land when he was twenty years old, and his father-in-law Darius was sixty-two.”²³

Evangelical commentator Alexander presents a slightly different view, although both Rashi's and Alexander's opinions are perfectly compatible with each other. According to Alexander, the problem phrase, “make a horn grow,” “can best be understood when two aspects of the horn symbolism are grasped: (1) strength and (2) a leader or ruler.”²⁴ For Rashi, this strong leader was Cyrus. For Alexander, “The symbol must refer to the strength and encouragement that Israel

²¹. Alexander, *EBC*, 893.

²². Rosenberg, *Prophets*, 255.

²³. *Ibid*, 256.

²⁴. Alexander, *EBC*, 893.

was to receive when she observed God's faithfulness to execute his judgement on her enemy, Egypt."²⁵

We still stand with Rashi's understanding of this "horn" because it is compatible with the use of the horn symbolism in the book of Daniel. Several times Daniel uses a horn to refer to specific leaders that would influence Israel's history. Since Daniel was a contemporary of Ezekiel, and also lived in Babylon, then it is reasonable to expect that both inspired prophets of the exile were employing the same type of symbolism.

Conclusion

We will now conclude our commentary by noting the last lesson of theology from the study. Our reading began with the lesson that Israel would learn when they saw themselves restored by God. The middle of the Haftarah consisted of three lessons that Egypt would learn. The haftarah concludes with a final lesson, that again, Israel would learn.

Ezekiel says that after all of these events Israel would know that God is the Lord. The humiliation of Egypt would open the way for Israel's restoration. Israel would see the "finger of God" in all this upheaval.²⁶ The "finger of God" would be evident to them when they beheld the precise fulfilment of Ezekiel's prophecies. They would know that God is the Lord of heaven and earth, the Sovereign who rises up nations and tears them down. They would finally understand that God keeps His covenants with those who are covenantally connected to Him.

After learning all of those lessons and witnessing all of the prophecy being fulfilled in connection to them, Israel would truly believe that Ezekiel, the faithful messenger of God's predictions, was a trustworthy and accurate prophet. This is the thrust of the final words, "and I [God] shall open your mouth in their midst. Then they will know that I am the Lord."

STUDY QUESTIONS

- I. What is the connection between this haftarah and the Torah portion?
2. What are four things that God promises to do for Israel in Ezekiel 28:25?
3. According to Ezekiel 28:26, how can we tell that these predictions have not yet been fulfilled?
4. What is the first theological lesson Israel was to learn in this haftarah?
5. Which pharaoh is the subject of Ezekiel 29:1?
6. Why is he referred to as a crocodile?
7. What was to be his destiny? Why?
8. What was the first theological lesson Egypt was to learn in this Haftarah?
9. Why is Egypt referred to as a reed?
10. What are the specific predictions that Ezekiel gives concerning what would happen to the people of Egypt and the land of Egypt?
- II. What is the second theological lesson that Egypt was to have learned?
12. Compare how the Babylonians handled the people of Judah with how they handled the people of Egypt.
13. What was the third theological lesson for Egypt?
14. Why would Israel never seek help from the Egyptians again?
15. What happened to the Babylonians when they attempted to conquer Tyre?
16. Who called the Babylonians to do this?

²⁵. *Ibid.*

²⁶. Hertz, *Pentateuch and Haftarahs*, 247.

17. Why would Egypt be given to the Babylonians?
18. Who or what is the "horn" in Ezekiel 29:21? What is the basis for your opinion?
19. What is the opinion put forth in this commentary and our reasoning?
20. What is the final theological lesson of this haftarah?

End Notes