

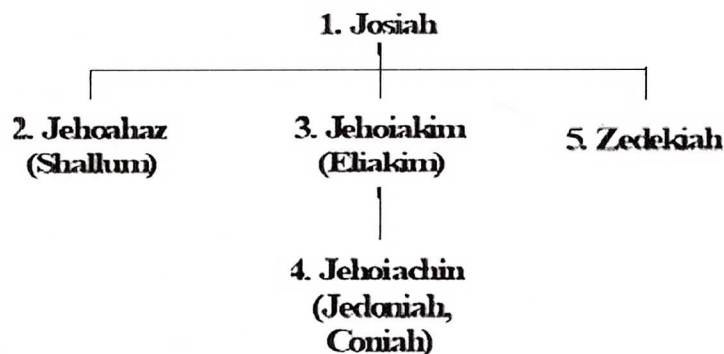
10. A lament for the kings of Israel ch. 19

Ezekiel concluded this section on the futility of false optimism (chaps. 12–19) with a lament or dirge for Israel and her leaders. This is the first of five laments in the book (cf. 26:17–18; 27; 28:12–19; 32:1–16). Three of the other laments were directed against Tyre, and the fourth (32:1–16) was for Egypt. A “lament” was a funeral song usually recited in honor of a dead person. The song generally stressed the good qualities of the departed and the tragedy or loss engendered by his death (cf. 2 Sam. 1:17–27).¹

This prophecy shows that there were no more rulers left in Judah who could restore the nation to its former glory. Evidently the exiles hoped that some Davidic descendant would prove successful in overcoming the Babylonians and restoring Israel’s sovereignty. This was their last hope, and it is the last prophecy in this section of the book that shows that such a hope was futile.

The prophecy contains two parts: The first part (vv. 1–9) uses the figure of a lion and her cubs to describe the Davidic line and two of its kings. The second part (vv. 10–14) uses the figure of a vine to describe Israel, including its final strong branch or king.²

The Last Five Kings of Judah



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19:1-9. The lion and her cubs. The Hebrew word translated “lament” here has the idea of a “funeral song” or a “dirge.” “A dirge was normally sung or chanted, by professional mourners after the death of the deceased and during his funeral. Ezekiel expressed the Lord’s sadness over the Judean leadership’s failure by chanting this elegy over her final rulers prior to their deaths ...”.⁴ The Hebrew word used for the leaders here is translated “princes.” It is clear in the context though, that these “princes” are specifically two kings of Judah. The diminished name may be because of their weakness as kings. The term “lioness” is used of the previous kings. Near East studies indicate that this was a term often used of kings (Gen. 49:9; Num. 23:24; 1 Kings 10:19–20; Mic. 5:8; cf. Rev. 5:5). Historically, we know the first prince referred to here, who “became a lion, ...learned to tear his prey, and devoured men and then ‘captured’ and brought to the land of Egypt” was King Jehoahaz.

¹ Dyer, *ibid.*, 1262.

² Constable, *ibid.*, Eze 19:1.

³ *Ibid.*, Eze. 1-2.

⁴ *Ibid.*

2 Kings 22-23:27 tells the story of Jehoahaz's father, Josiah. Josiah was an outstanding king and the last righteous king of Judah. Josiah's father was Amon who was an evil king that reigned only 2 years before he was murdered and his eight year old son was crowned by the people. 2 Kgs. 22:2 states, "He did right in the sight of the Lord and walked in all the way of his father David, nor did he turn aside to the right or to the left." When Josiah was 18, he began to make tremendous reforms in an attempt to turn Judah back to Yahweh. He began with having renovation done to the temple to get it back in shape. In the process, "the book of the law" (Deuteronomy, or possibly Genesis-Deuteronomy) was discovered and read to the king. After hearing the book Josiah was greatly disturbed and he sent some priests to the prophetess Huldah who said that God was angry because they had forsaken Him and were serving idols. But to Josiah God said through Huldah:

'Regarding the words which you have heard, ¹⁹because your heart was tender and you humbled yourself before the Lord when you heard what I spoke against this place and against its inhabitants that they should become a desolation and a curse, and you have torn your clothes and wept before Me, I truly have heard you,' declares the Lord. ²⁰ 'Therefore, behold, I will gather you to your fathers, and you will be gathered to your grave in peace, and your eyes will not see all the evil which I will bring on this place.' So they brought back word to the king.

As a result, Josiah went to the temple and had everyone come up to the temple. And he read the book of the law to them. Just as in the day of Moses, at Sinai and again before they entered the promised land, they all committed to follow the law and obey it. They removed all the vessels for worshiping Baal, Asherah and "the host of heaven" from "inside the temple!" He "did away with" all the idolatrous priest of Baal and the "host of heaven." He brought out the Asherah (a goddess) from the temple and burned and destroyed it. He broke down the houses of the male prostitutes "which were at the house of the Lord, where the women were weaving hangings for the Asherah. Etc. etc. (Take time later to read chapters 22-23:30). [NEVER QUESTION THE EXTEND TO GOD'S MERCY AND GRACE! THIS WAS JUDAH'S OPPORTUNITY TO REPENT!]

Jehoahaz Succeeds Josiah: ²⁸ Now the rest of the acts of Josiah and all that he did, are they not written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Judah? ²⁹ In his days Pharaoh Neco king of Egypt went up to the king of Assyria to the river Euphrates. And King Josiah went to meet him, and when *Pharaoh Neco* saw him he killed him at Megiddo. ³⁰ His servants drove his body in a chariot from Megiddo, and brought him to Jerusalem and buried him in his own tomb. Then the people of the land took Jehoahaz the son of Josiah and anointed him and made him king in place of his father. ³¹ Jehoahaz was twenty-three years old when he became king, and he reigned three months in Jerusalem; and his mother's name was Hamutal the daughter of Jeremiah of Libnah. ³² He did evil in the sight of the Lord, according to all that his fathers had done. ³³ Pharaoh Neco imprisoned him at Riblah in the land of Hamath, that he might not reign in Jerusalem; and he imposed on the land a fine of one hundred talents of silver and a talent of gold (2 Kings 23:28-33; Read also 2 Chron. 36:1-4).

Pharaoh Neco placed Jehoahaz on Judah's throne after Neco killed his father, Josiah, at Megiddo, thereby gaining sovereignty over Judah. However, Jehoahaz proved to be unmanageable, so Pharaoh took him to Egypt, where he finally died (2 Kings 23:31-34; 2

Chron. 36:1-4; Jer. 22:10-12). The Judeans had hoped that Jehoahaz would return from Egypt and rule again in Judah, but that was not to happen (cf. Jer. 22:10-12).⁵

Verses 5-9 speaks of the career of Jehoiachin. Constable states of his career:

This describes the career of King Jehoiachin, who also ruled over Judah for only three months (in 598-597 B.C.). Probably the writer omitted referring to King Jehoiakim, the intervening king, because he was not taken into exile like Jehoahaz and Jehoiachin. Other interpreters believe King Jehoiakim is the person in view. The Babylonians captured Jehoiachin and took him into exile in 597 B.C. Later he enjoyed a measure of freedom, but he never returned to rule over Judah (2 Kings 24:8-17; 25:27-30; 2 Chron. 36:8-10).⁶

Also ~ Ezekiel
Daniel

19:10-14. If you are confused at this point, don't feel bad. Here is a review/clarification. Good King Josiah had three sons and one grandson who reigned [see diagram above from Constable]. After Josiah was killed in 609BC by Pharaoh Neco, then [1] *Jehoahaz* became King (2 Kgs. 23:28-33 (Also known as *Joahaz* in 2 Chron. 36:1-4); Jehoahaz reigns for only 3 months until the Pharaoh came and took him to Egypt and placed [2] *Eliakim* on throne and changed his name to *Jehoiakim* (605BC). This is also when Daniel and his friends were taken back to Babylon (2 Chron. 36:5-8; Dan. 1:1-3); 11 years later, Nebuchadnezzar returned and "bound him with bronze chains to take him to Babylon" (2 Chron. 36:6) and he placed [3] Jehoiachin (also known as Jeconiah or Coniah) on the throne (598BC) who was the grandson of Josiah, and son of Jehoiakim (2 Chron. 36:9-10). He only ruled three months and ten days and "At the turn of the year (597BC) King Nebuchadnezzar sent and brought him to Babylon with the valuable articles of the house of the Lord, and he made his kinsman Zedekiah king over Judah and Jerusalem" (2 Chron. 36:10). Zedekiah (also known as Mattaniah), another son of Josiah and brother to both Jehoahaz and Jehoiakim became 598-586BC) reigned until 586BC when Babylon destroyed Jerusalem and the temple (2 Chron. 36:11-21).

¹¹ Zedekiah was twenty-one years old when he became king, and he reigned eleven years in Jerusalem. ¹² He did evil in the sight of the Lord his God; he did not humble himself before Jeremiah the prophet who spoke for the Lord. ... ¹⁵ The Lord, the God of their fathers, sent word to them again and again by His messengers, because He had compassion on His people and on His dwelling place;... ¹⁷ Therefore He brought up against them the king of the Chaldeans who slew their young men with the sword in the house of their sanctuary, and had no compassion on young man or virgin, old man or infirm; He gave them all into his hand (2 Chron. 36:11-12, 15, 17).

The vine (the Davidic dynasty) was now in the wilderness, a place of limited resources. It had burned up ("fire consumed it"), so there were no more strong shoots or fruit left in it. No "scepter" (v. 11) was in it now; there was no Davidic king who could rule over Israel. The vine was not completely destroyed, but it languished, having been transplanted into a hostile environment. Another view sees Zedekiah as the fire that consumed the shoots and fruit of the Davidic line.⁷

⁵ Ibid., Eze 19:3.

⁶ Ibid., Eze 19:5.

⁷ Ibid., Eze 19:12.