

# Dr. Leslie Allen, Ezekiel, Lecture 14, Doom for Egypt

## Ezekiel 29:1-32

© 2024 Leslie Allen and Ted Hildebrandt

This is Dr. Leslie Allen in his teaching on the book of Ezekiel. This is session 14, Doom for Egypt, Ezekiel 29:1-32.

We continue our study of this bridge section in the book of Ezekiel by looking at chapters 29-32 and these messages are all directed against Egypt. The first thing to notice is the initial date in the tenth month, in the tenth year, in the tenth month, on the twelfth day of the month.

And for the first time in the book, it backtracks, and it's earlier than the previous one. In 26:1, we mentioned the eleventh year, the first day of the month. And so, we've gone back to an early year and in grouping together these messages against Egypt there's this slight chronological discord.

This date in 29:1, 10, 12 refers to January 587, which was certainly before the fall of Judah's capital, and so it's pre-the fall of Jerusalem. And this dating suits the content of the first of the three messages in 29:1-16, namely in verses 3-6a. And I can say here that the NIV seems to be right in making the start of a new message with the second half of verse 6 This is because you were a staff of reed to the house of Israel.

This functions as an accusation for the next section, whereas the new RSV links it with the first half of verse 6. The oracles against Egypt, in general, seem to align with Ezekiel's negative pre-fall ministry about the coming downfall of Judah. And we should have to think through why that is. Well, because they're associated with Judah's hope of deliverance from Babylonian attack by the intervention of the Egyptian army.

This was their great hope. And already, you may remember that in chapter 17, verses 15-17, Ezekiel had spoken out against Zedekiah's negotiations with the Egyptian pharaoh and forecasted that no good would come of them. There's a fascinating text I've referred to in general before, but now we can actually look it up.

It's in chapter 37 of Ezekiel, verse 5. It tells us that during the siege, during the Babylonian siege of Jerusalem, the hope for an Egyptian army appeared on the southern Judean borders. And aha, here at last, the Judean army was turning up. And so the Babylonians besieging Jerusalem left Jerusalem, in fact, for a while to cope with this campaign, a little campaign against Egypt, which evidently was very successful.

The Egyptians were repulsed, and the Babylonians came back to besiege Jerusalem. Judah's last hope was gone in that appeal to Egypt, which hadn't materialized with Egyptian success. In fact, the second message in 6b-9a is already aware of the failure of this counterattack from Egypt, Judah's ally, as we shall see.

And so, in principle, the messages against Egypt in chapters 29-32, all of them, in fact, do align with Ezekiel's pre-fall ministry. However, when we were looking at chapters 25-28, we saw that they belonged to his post-fall prophesying. And that may seem strange, that now we've gone back and the two halves of the foreign messages are put in that particular order.

Post-587, pre-587. We would have reversed them so that 29-32 followed chapter 24 and chapters 25-28 would come just before chapters 33, which represents the turning of the tide and Ezekiel moving to basically positive messages. However, we have noticed that the second edition of the book of Ezekiel has chosen to anticipate good news and this is what has been happening in chapters 25-28.

The arrangement of these chapters then aligns with the structural arrangement, which is a feature of the book as a whole. So, coming back in detail, verses 3-6a continue the theme of most of chapters 1-24, that the 987, let's get it right, the 597 exiles were wrong in thinking that God was on their side and would soon take them home. But in fact, the worst was going to happen, and their last hope of relief from Egypt failed during the siege of Jerusalem.

Not even this second superpower, Egypt, was in the ancient Near East, and not even Egypt could avail itself against the Babylonians, who were the implicit agents of God's punishment of Judah. And here, in this first section, the Pharaoh, it's a message against Pharaoh, a rhetorical message against Pharaoh, while the 597 exiles listen. The Pharaoh is characterized as an animal, and there's this metaphor of him being a monster living in the Nile River and, basically, probably a crocodile, but with overtones of the chaos monster, which sometimes in the Old Testament is called Leviathan.

And so, this is the contrast here. Pharaoh claims to be the master of the Nile domain and even its maker. And the Nile irrigation, of course, was the source of Egypt's prosperity.

But no, God was going to hunt down this monster, and he was going to defeat him and destroy him and his subjects. And so, there's an admission that Pharaoh has great power, but God has greater power. And so, Egypt will fail.

Of course, the second oracle can go on to give solid evidence that Egypt did fail. Verses 6b through 9a come from a little later, after that Egyptian counter-attack had failed, and the Babylonian army had repulsed them and came back to resume the

siege. This message is already aware of the failure of the Egyptian attempt to give Judah military support.

And his support is ironically called a staff of reed because you were a staff of reed to the house of Israel. A staff no longer than a reed is what the Pharaoh is ironically called. Such a tall reed grew abundantly in the Nile.

So, we still have strong Nile associations. That metaphor recalls an earlier time in Judah's history when Judah had also approached Egypt for help, this time against the Assyrians in Hezekiah's reign. And there, too, Egypt had turned out to be a broken reed.

And we're told that in chapter 36, yes, it is actually 36, and in verse 6, the Assyrian envoy brings a message to Hezekiah. See, you are relying on Egypt, that broken staff of a reed, which will pierce the hand of anyone who leans on it. And then there's another similar message in the book of Isaiah, back in chapter 31 and verse 1. I'm not sure that I've got the right reference. I'll have to check it.

Oh, yes, 31:1, Alas for those who go down to Egypt for help and rely on horses and trust in chariots, but do not look to the Holy One of Israel. And so again, this is referring to Hezekiah's policy of trying to get aid from Egypt. And in 31.1, the forecast is, it's not going to work out.

And the Assyrian envoy said the same thing, but spoken of this broken reed, that's how he's going to turn out. And interestingly enough, both of those chapters use the word lean. And this is the verb that's going to come up in verse 7. When they leaned on you, you broke and made all their legs unsteady.

And back in 36.6, you are relying on Egypt. In Hebrew, it's the same verb: you are leaning on Egypt, that broken reed. And then in 31:1, you rely on horses, you're relying on Egyptian horses, it's that same verb for leaning.

Leaning and relying are part of the traditional vocabulary of faith that Hebrews use in relation to God. But here, there's this alternative faith. This is what crops up again.

This reed was a staff of reed, and you leaned on it and they leaned on you, the Judeans leaned on you, and you broke. And so there we are.

There's this accusation there, implicitly, that Judah was doing the wrong thing by turning to Egypt for help. And now the same mistake was being made. And so the Pharaoh was to suffer at God's hands, and God would use the Babylonian sword to defeat him.

The third message is in verses 9 through 16, and it reflects on the two earlier messages and sets them in a wider context. It speaks of restoration beyond judgment for Egypt, which seems to put it in the same category as the oracles in the book that belongs to the post-587 ministry.

There is talk of restoration, and there is an admission that Egypt is going to be restored. Egypt is going to be exiled, and then Egypt is going to be restored, following the same pattern as Judah.

There's this unexpected echo of what was to be Judah's own experience. But it goes on to say that yes, Egypt would survive, but no longer as a political superpower but as a third-world country. In this new case, Egypt would no longer be a temptation to the Judeans, themselves restored from exile, no longer a temptation for Judah to put their military trust in Egypt.

And so, the Egyptians would be taught an unforgettable lesson, that they should not be this staff in alliance, in military alliance with Judah. As I say, this message appears to belong to Ezekiel's post-587 ministry, but it serves to reinforce the theme of his pre-587 prophesying, and it has the same overall theme of the downfall of Egypt, even as it speaks of restoration. When we reach 29, 17 to 21, we're confronted with a number of surprises.

First, the date leaps ahead, 16 years from the last date, to March 571. That's a surprise in itself. And in fact, this is the latest date in the whole book.

Chapter 40 and verse 1 refer to 573, which is the latest date, but now we go beyond that to the equivalent of 571. In the 27th year, the first month on the first day of the month, the word of the Lord came to me. So that's the first surprise.

The second surprise is that its content primarily isn't dealing with Egypt, it's dealing with Tyre. And it's talking about Ezekiel's earlier oracles against Tyre, and Egypt is brought into this discussion. And in fact, as one reads through this message, it seems to reflect criticism of Ezekiel from the Judean exiles on the grounds that his messages of Tyre's destruction were not fulfilled in the literal way the prophet had described.

Now, we said that Tyre was besieged. Josephus, the Jewish historian in Roman times, reports a tradition that that siege, the Babylonian siege of Tyre, lasted a very long time, for 13 years, presumably from about 586 to 573. And then, after so long a campaign, when the troops eventually gained control of the island, those Babylonian troops found Tyre's cupboard was bare.

Its wealth had been used up over the years, or it had been moved to a safe place, as we might say, to a Swiss bank and certainly away from Tyre. Now, this was very tragic

for the Babylonian troops because they depended on looting as part of their wages. And once they got onto the island, they found nothing there.

So, when they returned home, they complained bitterly. And the Judean exiles heard about this complaint, and they used it as a stick to beat Ezekiel with. And it really was quite serious because it could be used as an argument that Ezekiel's prophecies about the future, return to the land, and all that good stuff would never happen either.

And so, could you depend on Ezekiel? He'd spoken earlier of false prophets. Well, he's a false prophet himself. And the basis of that accusation is that Ezekiel has spoken of looting. The Babylonians would loot Tyre when they conquered it, and we'll look back at those references.

But if we think of what the fate of Tyre was, Tyre was conquered, and there's a Babylonian list of royal hostages, dated about 570, that includes the king of Tyre among those royal hostages. And so, he was certainly deported, like King Jehoiakim of Judah before him. And then, we also know from Babylonian records, about 564, the reigning king of Tyre was replaced by a Babylonian high commissioner.

And so, Babylon gained complete control of Tyre, and ruled it eventually as a province, as a Babylonian province, with their own officials in charge. But the problem was Ezekiel had mentioned looting in chapter 26 and verse 5. It shall become plunder for the nations, those foreign contingents who made up the Babylonian army. And then, in 26:12, they will plunder your riches and loot your merchandise.

There was nothing there, nothing there. And so, Ezekiel was wrong. Was he a false prophet? His critics said so.

Well, says the new message here. The Babylonian army will get their perks from Egypt instead as a consolation prize. And indeed, Nebuchadnezzar did invade Egypt in 568, and the campaign may already have been in the air in 571.

But was Ezekiel a false prophet? What he'd said didn't literally come true. And perhaps we can surmise that rhetorical embellishment can play a part in a prophetic message, to lend emotional support to that message, to its general theme. As a parallel, perhaps we can compare Jeremiah 50 through 51, a long pair of messages against Babylon.

Babylon is going to be destroyed! Well, in actual fact, in 539, Cyrus' army quietly took over the city and was welcomed by its citizens, who were fed up by their present ruler. But Babylon certainly lost its imperial power with Cyrus' takeover. And so, in a

very real way, those oracles were true, but with the rhetorical embellishment, as it turned out, because the destruction never happened, only a peaceful takeover.

And this message just admits that the looting didn't happen and that the disgruntled army would get an alternative opportunity. There are two messages here, a public one in 15 to 20 and a private one to Ezekiel in verse 21. And that private message in verse 21 is a pastoral reassurance to the prophet that expresses God's concern for Ezekiel in his embarrassment.

On that day, I will cause a horn to sprout up for the house of Israel, and I will open your lips among them, then they shall know that I am the Lord. The horn speaks of prosperity and honor for the house of Israel. Those positive messages are going to come true, and also, in your prophetic ministry, I'm going to open your lips.

This doesn't seem to be a reference to the ending of that old symbolic action, but it refers to the confidence that God would enable the prophet to have. Through the fulfillment of his messages, he can trust God that those positive messages are going to be fulfilled. But God's destructive work against Egypt through the Babylonians was the precursor of salvation for his people.

The exiles would eventually be restored and be rehabilitated. We come now to chapter 30, and the collection of messages in chapter 30, verses 1 through 19, the whole chapter, they've been put together into one literary grouping. And it's reasonable to suppose that we return now to the earlier period of those earlier messages, pre-587.

And the implicit lesson is that the exiles' hopes that Egypt would decisively drive the Babylonian army away from besieged Jerusalem would not materialize. We come back to that theme again. Instead, this day of the Lord would overwhelm Egypt.

And we have use of that prophetic theme of the day of the Lord. Well, alas, for the day, 31, 2. Verse 3, for a day is near, the day of the Lord is near. It will be a day of clouds, a time of doom.

A sword shall come upon Egypt. And this is picking up and using a prophetic motif that often occurs in, or at least sometimes occurs, in oracles of judgment against Judah and against the Northern Kingdom. But in this case, it's transferred, and Egypt is going to be the victim of that day of the Lord when Yahweh intervenes in a hostile way.

In chapter 7, we may remember that Ezekiel picked up that theme of the day of the Lord and applied it against Judah. Now, it's redirected against Egypt. So, from Judah's point of view, it endorses the judgment of both Egypt and Judah.

Egypt's allied troops are listed in verse 5, including Judean mercenaries, which is interesting. There was a settlement right in the south of Egypt called Elephantine. It was at the southern border and was a military fortress defending against attack from the south.

And it was largely made up of Jewish mercenaries. And we have preserved correspondence from Elephantine to Jerusalem and to Persia in the post-exilic period. And here now, there were Judean mercenaries, evidently.

This comes out more clearly in the NIV in verse 5, which speaks of the people of the covenant land as among the mercenary troops that Egypt had. Verses 10 to 12 are a second message of judgment that explains the sword. A sword is mentioned in verse 4. A sword shall come upon Egypt.

This is now explained at greater length. It's explained in historical terms as Nebuchadnezzar. In verse 10, I will put a hand to the hordes of Egypt by the hand of King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon.

He and his people with them, the most terrible of the nations. Because it wasn't only Babylonian troops, the Babylonians too had their allies, their imperial allies, vassal troops from the various nations that made up the Babylonian empire.

Verses 13 through 19 enumerate the Egyptian cities that would suffer and be overwhelmed. These messages express emotional vehemence to induce the exiles to accept an unwelcome truth. Egypt would prove to be no good friend of Judah.

The message in 30 verses 20 through 26 has its own date. The 11th year, the first month, the 7th year of the month. And that is two months later than the initial date in 29.1. And time has moved on.

It's now March 587, and we're still in siege time. But there's been an important development.

Which we've already spoken of in an earlier oracle. That now, in fact, the Babylonians had driven back the Egyptian army that had come to Jerusalem's aid. So now the siege would be resumed.

And so here again, the exile's last hopes have been dashed. And the news is given a theological interpretation in God's private message to Ezekiel in verse 21. Mortal, I have broken the arm of Pharaoh, king of Egypt.

It is not bound up for healing or wrapped with a bandage so that it may become strong enough to wield the sword. And so, there's this strong and effective repulsing

of the Egyptian attempt to lift the Babylonian siege. God had decisively broken Pharaoh's arm as it was beyond mending, and he was unable to fight.

And this news warrants a public message which is set out in verses 22 to 26. That in the future lay another attack from the Babylonians against Egypt. A double attack in verse 22.

I am against Pharaoh, king of Egypt. I will break his arms, both the strong arm and the one that was broken. And I will make the sword fall from his hand.

That's a difficult sentiment to understand. And the suggestion has been made and it seems quite plausible that there's mentioned here of two campaigns against Egypt. One from the land and one from the sea.

And in both cases, they would be victorious. And break again Pharaoh's broken arm but then also defeat not only his land forces but also Pharaoh's sea fleet. And Nebuchadnezzar was going to be God's swordsman it goes on to say.

The king of Babylon is going to wield God's sword. And so Nebuchadnezzar did campaign against Egypt in 568. But it doesn't seem to have been a very strong campaign.

It doesn't seem to have resulted in invasion of Egypt for instance. And so, it doesn't seem to fit this message here or the previous ones that spoke of Nebuchadnezzar's defeat of Egypt. And it may be that Ezekiel had an intuition of foreboding concerning the Persian king Cambyses who brutally conquered Egypt in 525 BC.

But anyway, his messages in this chapter represent a loud repeated no to the hopes of his fellow exiles. There could be no quick solution to their problems. No easy exit from them, such as Egyptian military support, might have provided.

God's will did not lie in that direction. We come to chapter 31 and now there is a new date. The 11th year, the third month on the first day of the month.

We may have noticed that we have a proliferation of dating in these foreign oracles which is contrary to that structural pattern that we found earlier on where decisive parts of the book were differentiated in ongoing sequence of dates. But there is a different pattern in this excitement of the siege of Jerusalem. Egypt is very much in people's minds and Ezekiel is giving a whole series of messages to do with the siege.

And so there is this different practice here of giving quite a number. And this is two months further on from the date of 3020. We have now reached May 587, and this is still siege time.



We have three smaller but closely related messages grouped together here in 31 in verses 1 to 18. It's verses 2 to 9, 10 to 14, and then 15 to 18. Now, I have a problem in verse 3. It says to consider Assyria, a cedar of Lebanon, and talk about Assyria falling and then contrasting it with Egypt.

Well, is that right? A number of commentators are a bit unhappy about a mention of Assyria here and would prefer a reference to a very similar Hebrew word which refers to a huge tree along with a cedar of Lebanon. And the question is, in resolving this problem or trying to, what is the meaning of the question in verse 2? Whom are you like in your greatness? Is this a true question that's seeking information and then it goes on? Well, perhaps Assyria. Perhaps you're as great as Assyria was but of course Assyria fell.

And so, if it's a real question, Assyria fits in very well. In our traditional Hebrew text, Assyria assumes that the question in verse 2 is not a rhetorical one that doesn't expect an answer, but it's one that invites a historical reference. So, which is it? Is it a rhetorical question or a real question that expects an answer? And the interesting thing is that there is a pickup of the question in verse 18.

Which among the trees of Eden was like you in glory and greatness? And that's a rhetorical question. That's a rhetorical question. And it suggests that this is rhetorical here.

That Egypt is incomparable. Egypt is incomparable. Egypt is the greatest.

And then, we move to a metaphor. The exploring of a metaphor. Talking about a great tree, which is also incomparable.

And so, there's an illustration of Egypt's incomparability with this tree. And this brings in a theme that was very popular in the ancient Near East of a cosmic tree. The world, the earth was regarded as a great tree.

It towered up into heaven, and its roots were in the subterranean waters. This enormous tree represents the world, and it is a metaphor illustrating incomparability.

I'll tell you about something incomparable. But are you really like that? Are you really like that? This tree sounds incomparable and is likely to last forever. As Ezekiel explores the metaphor, it's destroyed.

It's destroyed. And so, there's a turning on its head. This metaphor of the cosmic tree.

And there is a mention as we go through this of a vital factor. In verse 8, it mentions the cedars in the garden of God that couldn't rival it. Nor do the fir trees equal its boughs.

The plane trees were nothing compared to their branches. No tree in the garden of God was like it in beauty. I made it beautiful, verse 9, with its mass of branches.

The envy of all the trees of Eden that were in the garden of God. So, we get a mixture of this metaphor of this great tree with this other idea of the Garden of Eden. With its beautiful trees.

And the vital thing is God created those trees. And God created that great tree, which in the metaphor represents Egypt. And so that makes all the difference.

And so, although it's incomparable, it seems to be eternal and everlasting. It was creation. And so, the will of God is going to prevail against it.

There's this new vital fact over against all its power and all its enduring strength. And so, we have to think again. It's incomparable.

Yes, we admit that. Yes, it's a superpower. Yes, it's so powerful.

But it's in God's garden. It's in God's garden. If God wants, he can chop it down.

He can chop it down. And so there we are. The metaphor is given a twist.

And Egypt, like the cosmic tree, with all its achievements and all its power, is going to come crashing down to the ground. Because God so wills. There's going to be a judgment against it, in point of fact.

In verses 10 through 14, this tree is openly equated with Egypt by the references to the Babylonian defeat of the Egyptian army that had tried to come to Judah's defense. So, this height of the tree, in verse 10, this enormous tree, it's regarded as representing the pride of Egypt, the going it alone, the self-sufficiency of Egypt. And this is very much now an accusation that is the cause for the downfall of the Egyptian tree.

And so, the height of the tree becomes a symbol of Egyptian high and mighty pride. And now the tree is going to be chopped down, and it's going to litter the ground with its now lifeless branches. That's going to be the end of Egypt.

Now, it's talking of it in the past tense about the Egyptian tree dying and going down to the underworld. In verses 11 through 12, it's referring back to that Babylonian

defeat of the Egyptian army. But is that what it means? Is that what it means? Are the references what they mean? And it may well be a funeral lament.

This Oracle of Judgment may well be a funeral lament. It isn't announced as such at the beginning of chapter 31, but if it's a funeral lament, then you put in the past tense what is going to happen. And we saw that illustrated at the beginning of Amos chapter 5. And Ezekiel does seem to have in view the defeat caused by a Babylonian army in the future, in a very certain future.

And what makes one think like that is that there seems to be an envisioning of Egyptian exile. And that certainly didn't fit what the Babylonians were able to do in their attack on Egypt in 582. This is a much more forceful campaign here.

But at the end of verse 11, I have cast it out. I have cast it out. It seems to refer to an exile of Egypt.

And so, this seems to be looking forward. Beyond 582, in fact, which didn't do that. And Certainly, in 15 to 18, we have a funeral lament evoked in the language of this third message 15 to 18.

God orders morning rituals for the dead in Egypt. And past national powers are already down there languishing in the underworld. And we're told that they're gratified that their powerful survivor has been toppled at last.

Egypt has joined them. Verse 18 refers to the direct address of verse 2, addressing the pharaoh with his army. It closes with a plain third-person interpretation.

This is a Pharaoh and all his horde, says the Lord. And basically, Ezekiel is still coping with the optimism of his fellow prisoners of war. They were still hoping for the Babylonian threat to Jerusalem to go away.

They were pinning those hopes on Egypt. And the prophet admits that there were good grounds for the optimism. Egypt was indeed a military power to reckon with.

And yet the exiles had reckoned without God's purposes. Punitive purposes that used Nebuchadnezzar as his agent and removed all obstacles that stood in the way. The pharaoh, with his incomparable power, would finally meet his match in the one who had the power of life and death, God himself.

Chapter 32 is the closing chapter of these foreign messages, and it still needs to deal with Egypt. Verses 1 through 16 are a grouping of shorter messages, four shorter messages. 3 to 8, 9 to 10, 11 to 14, 15 to 16.

All were directed still against Egypt. And they're called, collectively, a lamentation. We do have this formal designation in verse 2. Raise a lamentation against Pharaoh, king of Egypt.

And say to him as follows. In verse 16, at the end, we also have reference to a lamentation. This is a lamentation.

It shall be chanted. The women of the nation shall chant it. Over Egypt and all its hordes, they shall chant it, says the Lord.

So here we have this lamentation. Which actually, of course, is an oracle of judgment. And in the course of the message, it reads, actually, more like a plain oracle of judgment.

But in verses 7 and 8, it calls for mourning in the sky. The sky should mourn for Egypt. Verse 8: all the shining lights of the heavens, I will darken above you and put darkness in your land.

And then it goes on to say, in the first part of 9, I will trouble the hearts of many people. And this, too, is mourning on behalf of the great nation of Egypt. But apart from that, it's mainly a plain oracle of judgment.

But there's a new date at the beginning of chapter 32. And this is March 585. And Jerusalem had fallen by now.

587 was over. Jerusalem had fallen, and the prisoners of war must have been informed of that fact by now. Yet, in substance, verses 1 to 6 read like a reissue of 29, 3 to 6, which were designed to counter hopes that Egypt would come to Jerusalem's rescue.

And you get the impression that even after the fall of Jerusalem, there were some prisoners of war who said, We hope that Egypt won't tolerate the Babylonians' control of Palestine and Syria. We hope that they will mount a massive counter-attack. And so, if that's true, then even though the siege was over and Jerusalem had fallen, they were still pinning their hopes that Egypt might intervene at this very, very last stage.

The message begins in verse 2 by referring to the pharaoh as a lion, king of the international jungle. Yes, a power to reckon with. But then it develops a second comparison, a crocodile in the Nile, but a crocodile larger than life.

It's the chaos monster again. This combination of crocodile and chaos monster was one we had in an earlier oracle against Egypt. And over against such power, God's

role was to be the hunter, hunting down this beast and spreading its lifeless, massive carcass over mountains and valleys.

The message identifies God's hunting of the Egyptian monster with an attack by Nebuchadnezzar on Egypt. He's going to be God's agent. The text is looking forward to a further attack on Egypt, a devastating attack.

And then, in verse 17, we come to this next oracle, 17 to 32, bringing us to the end of the Egyptian messages and the end of the messages against the foreign nations. And this is a judgment oracle against Egypt's military power. No months were applied here.

It's in the 12th year. Yes, if you look at the new RSV, it does supply a month. In the 12th year, in the first month, on the 15th day of the month, there's a footnote.

The Hebrew text doesn't have a reference to the month, and it's imported from the Septuagint. And that's probably an easier reading. That's a scribal revision, which is very nice, but it's not part of the original text, in fact.

But it's a correct interpretation because it seems to be the... In verse 32, now, no, in 32, verse 1, the 12th year and the 12th month, and here in the 12th year in the first month. Well, going way back, I don't know why the Septuagint should have done that. But we seem to be in, and we are in 585, but probably seemingly later.

And this final message against Egypt envisions the final defeat of the Egyptian army. It portrays that defeat in terms of deaths and going down to the underworld, which was a note we had earlier where Egypt was concerned. And the message contrasts an honorable burial and a place of honor in the underworld with the fate of two other groups, uncircumcised people and people who died a violent death by the sword.

It was believed that they went to a lower and dishonorable place in the underworld. This idea seems to have been picked up, and Egypt is going to be put in this worse place, not in a place of honor. And so their fate was evidently to be allocated to this separate shameful place in the underworld.

This was in store for Egypt. And another feature of this message is that Egypt is set along other nations who had once exercised great power, and there's a list of them enumerated, but they were now only empty memories, just museum pieces. And there's mention of Assyria down in the underworld.

Assyria had once ruled the ancient Near East, but now no longer. There's mention of Elam, east of Babylon, which had once ruled southern Mesopotamia until driven out

by Assyria. There's mention of Meshech Tubal, southeast of the Dead Sea, which had once been a serious threat to Assyria in the 8th century BC.

But all these were has-beens. All these were now of military importance only to the historian, like France under Napoleon or Germany under Hitler. And so Egypt's going to take that place, which is important no longer, just of interest to the historian, and nothing more.

And then a few other nations are listed in verses 29 and 30, but now from a Palestinian perspective rather than from a Babylonian one. Glancing back over those foreign messages, we need to notice an increasing preoccupation with death and the underworld. It's been cropping up over and over again in 26, 28, 31, and finally reiterated loud and long in chapter 32.

And there's this morbid preoccupation with the fate of the foreign nations as involving the underworld. This morbid preoccupation has an important structural role in the book because it aligns with the general tenor of Ezekiel's negative messages for Judah. Judah is in exile, going through a death-like experience even now.

This negativity, it comes to a head in this speaking of death and the underworld. And it's important that it's stressed now because we're going to be moving on, and we're going to be moving on to a preoccupation with life. Life and living are going to be keywords from chapter 33 onwards.

And so, we have this polarization of death and life. Now, life is going to take over from all that talk of death we've had implied or expressed in those earlier chapters. Next time, we should be studying chapter 33. Let's go to chapter 32, verse 32.

This is Dr. Leslie Allen in his teaching on the book of Ezekiel. This is session 14, Doom for Egypt, Ezekiel 29:1-32.