

The Visions of Ezekiel

Lesson 21

Ezekiel's Forty-second Assignment from the LORD – Sidon

10. The Prophecy Against Sidon

28:20 And the word of the LORD came to me saying, 28:21 "Son of man, set your face toward Sidon, prophesy against her

From the *Chabar River*, Ezekiel needed only to turn due west to look toward the city of Sidon some five hundred miles away. Sidon rested at the foot of Mount Libanus. It was established years before Tyre. In fact, people from Sidon moved south and established the city of Tyre; therefore, there was a Phoenician blood line that linked the two cities (Isaiah 23:2). By the time of the campaign to conquer the Promised Land beginning in 1425 BC, Sidon was a great and powerful city (Joshua 11:8). The city was originally built or established by Canaan's son, Sidon (Zidon – Genesis 10:15; 1st Chronicles 1:13).

a) The Glory of the Lord in Sidon

28:22 and say, 'Thus says the Lord GOD, "Behold, I am against you, O Sidon, And I will be glorified in your midst. Then they will know that I am the LORD when I execute judgments in her, And I will manifest My holiness in her.

The LORD had an axe to grind with Sidon. Her history included her great influence in the world of promoting Phoenician gods and the carving of idols for the worship of those gods. For that, the LORD needed to wipe her clean, purify her. She was sinful – not sinless. She needed to see the glory of the LORD in her midst, not for worship purposes, but for punishment purposes. Sidon will see the LORD's holiness. Stop on that word for a moment – holiness. Today we have a namby-pamby idea concerning **"holiness."** We think meek, mild, caring, docile, gentle, submissive and accommodating. But holiness, true holiness, righteous holiness will stand against the test of evil and bring annihilation to the enemy of God. If you do not believe that, read the last book of the sixty-six books of the Bible, the book that sums up all the promises of God and shows the Second Coming of the LORD to destroy evil through His holiness.

b) The Pestilence and Sword in the Streets of Sidon

28:23 "For I will send pestilence to her And blood to her streets, And the wounded will fall in her midst By the sword upon her on every side; Then they will know that I am the LORD.

Again, the famous three destroyers are mentioned, pestilence, blood, sword. We must remember that the same LORD Who controlled all of nature would be coming against this city of Sidon. No mere human, no multitude of humans and not angelic creatures alone or in mass force can ever overpower the LORD. When He attacked, Sidon would know that it was the LORD.

c) The Prickling Brier Against Israel

28:24 "And there will be no more for the house of Israel a prickling brier or a painful thorn from any round about them who scorned them; then they will know that I am the LORD GOD."

When the LORD punished Sidon, all of Israel was in exile in Babylon. The Southern Kingdom had fallen in 586 BC, Tyre in 572 BC and Sidon followed. Nevertheless, the *nation of Israel* was not going to be in exile forever. In 536 BC, Israel would be allowed to return to the land that was once called the Southern Kingdom to establish her life anew as she was rebuilt under the direction and control of the Persian Empire. With Israel's move back to the land, Sidon would not bother her again or seek to influence her as before.

(1) Israel to be Gathered

28:25 'Thus says the Lord GOD, "When I gather the house of Israel from the peoples among whom they are scattered, and will manifest My holiness in them in the sight of the nations, then they will live in their land which I gave to My servant Jacob.

The *nation of Israel* would return to the land that was promised to her. Once there, the LORD would **"manifest"** Himself in all His holiness and all the nations surrounding the old Southern Kingdom would know it. **"Manifest My holiness,"** what does that mean? Interesting enough, it is one word in Hebrew, *qadash*. It is translated in other places as to *consecrate or to set apart* in connection with the LORD. When the LORD returned the *nation of Israel* to the Promised Land, not only would He consecrate the nation for Himself but He would also show Himself in the midst of the nation. That promise of the LORD would be fulfilled just about 582 years after this prophecy when He took the form of a Babe and arrived in Bethlehem. But we cannot stop here, the LORD had another amazing promise for the *nation of Israel* in the last verse of this vision.

(2) Israel to Live Securely

28:26 "They will live in it securely; and they will build houses, plant vineyards and live securely when I execute judgments upon all who scorn them round about them. Then they will **know that I am the LORD their God."**

"... live in it securely ... live securely" Amazing words! When the *nation of Israel* returned to her Promised Land, she would **"... live in it securely ... live securely"** That promise stands to this day. Israel may have those who seek to rid this world of her, annihilate her, obliterate her and they can try all they want, but they will never be successful. The LORD would protect Israel from 536 BC until the Second Coming of the LORD. It was a promise to His nation and the righteous people of that nation; however, that promise did not extend to the wicked humans within the ranks. The scorn of the LORD would still send them to the place of torment in Sheol/Hades. Righteous or wicked, Israelite or not, the LORD promised that **"they will know that I am the LORD their God."**

F. Vision Six – (29:1 – 29:16) 10th Year, 10th Day, 12th Month

Ezekiel's Forty-third Assignment from the LORD – Egypt

1. The Date

29:1 In the tenth year, in the tenth month, on the twelfth of the month, **the word of the LORD came to me saying,**

With the first verse of chapter 29, the sixth vision, we must address a problem in the chronology of the book. All the previous five visions and twenty-eight chapters were in perfect chronological order spanning the time from the call of Ezekiel and the setting of Zedekiah on the throne in the Southern Kingdom in 597 BC to the year of the destruction of Jerusalem in 586 BC. It was our conclusion that the fifth vision, given on the first day of the month of the eleventh year, occurred in the first month of the eleventh year of the reign of King Zedekiah. If that was the case, this sixth vision was actually given just forty-seven days before the fifth vision.

Although this vision is out of order with the first five, the actual events are not out of order. Nebuchadnezzar had already hamstrung Egypt, but he had not destroyed her abilities to act as a nation. That would not take place until after the fall of Jerusalem, Moab, Ammon and Tyre. The death of Ethbaal

III and the destruction of the old city of Tyre will be completed in 572 BC. Then Nebuchadnezzar will turn his attention to Egypt and destroy it two years later in 570 BC.

2. Against Pharaoh and the People of Egypt

29:2 "Son of man, set your face against Pharaoh king of Egypt and prophesy against him and against all Egypt.

King Zedekiah was still in charge in Jerusalem. The city had been surrounded by Nebuchadnezzar's army for almost three years. Hopeless, Zedekiah reached out for help from Egypt's Pharaoh. Pharaoh Necco had died and his son, Hophra, was on the Egyptian throne. Hophra would serve as the official Pharaoh over Egypt from 589 BC to 570 BC, but not without significant challenges.

The LORD's prophecy for Egypt and its last Egyptian Pharaoh was cast in the terms of a great monster in the midst of the Nile River.

3. The Great Monster of the River

a) Egypt's Monster

29:3 "Speak and say, 'Thus says the Lord GOD, "Behold, I am against you, Pharaoh king of Egypt, The great monster that lies in the midst of his rivers, That has said, 'My Nile is mine, and I myself have made it.' 29:4 "I will put hooks in your jaws And make the fish of your rivers cling to your scales. And I will bring you up out of the midst of your rivers, And all the fish of your rivers will cling to your scales. 29:5 "I will abandon you to the wilderness, you and all the fish of your rivers; You will fall on the open field; you will not be brought together or gathered. I have given you for food to the beasts of the earth and to the birds of the sky.

Obviously, the LORD was comparing Pharaoh Hophra to the monster of the Nile, the crocodile. Pharaoh Hophra was also known as Pharaoh Apries in some records. One was his common name, the other his god name. The word for **"great monster"** is *battanim* and its proper translation is *crocodile*. It was the symbol of Egypt and Hophra took that symbol, made it his own and took credit for all the blessings Egypt received from the Nile. The LORD did not take that lightly. Hophra was in direct rebellion to the LORD. Hophra would pay the penalty. He would serve as Pharaoh of Egypt for nineteen years and this vision came in his third year as ruler. That meant that he would hold his office for sixteen more years. The punishment of the LORD was slow to come but when it came it was complete. During his reign, an insurrection occurred among the people, led by one of Hophra's generals. His name was *Amasis* and he was proclaimed as Pharaoh by some of the people he led. Hophra ran to the mountains of southern Egypt for security from *Amasis*.

The crocodile was Hophra but the clinging fish that stuck to the crocodile (Hophra) was his general, *Amasis*. The general chased Hophra into upper Egypt and captured him. At some point he strangled him.
⁵³ The great monster was dead.

b) Egypt's First Sin

29:6 "Then all the inhabitants of Egypt will know that I am the LORD, Because they have been only a staff made of reed to the house of Israel. 29:7 "When they took hold of you with the hand, You broke and tore all their hands; And when they leaned on you, You broke and made all their loins quake."

The first sin of Egypt concerned its reliability. Zedekiah had counted on Egypt but Egypt could not be counted on. By the time this vision was given, Egypt had lost all her strength. It was no stronger than a reed in the water of the Nile. Egypt had promised to support Israel in her battle against Babylon but

⁵³ Herod. lib. 2 s. 169.

could not give them any assistance. With the pressure on, the insurrection grew among the Egyptians and the reed snapped – dead.

c) Egypt's Punishment

29:8 'Therefore thus says the Lord GOD, "Behold, I will bring upon you a sword and I will cut off from you man and beast. 29:9 "The land of Egypt will become a desolation and waste. Then they will know that I am the LORD. Because you said, 'The Nile is mine, and I have made it,'

Because of her unfulfilled promise to the Southern Kingdom, **"Egypt will become a desolation and waste."** Why did the LORD proclaim this doom on Egypt? It was because Hophra had proclaimed that he had created the Nile River. Claiming to be God is a serious offense to God.

d) Egypt's Exile

29:10 therefore, behold, I am against you and against your rivers, and I will make the land of Egypt an utter waste and desolation, from Migdol to Syene and even to the border of Ethiopia. 29:11 "A man's foot will not pass through it, and the foot of a beast will not pass through it, and it will not be inhabited for forty years. 29:12 "So I will make the land of Egypt a desolation in the midst of desolated lands. And her cities, in the midst of cities that are laid waste, will be desolate forty years; and I will scatter the Egyptians among the nations and disperse them among the lands."

Migdol sat in the delta of the Nile River near the Mediterranean Sea. Syene sat hundreds of miles to the south and was the last village before entering the land of Cush, Ethiopia today. We know *Syene* today as Aswan, the location of the famous Aswan Dam.

After Nebuchadnezzar made it into Egypt in 572 BC, Hophra was already in trouble and on the run. Amasis killed Hophra in 570 BC two years after Nebuchadnezzar made it into the delta of Egypt. Hophra's death occurred hundreds of miles to the south.

As Nebuchadnezzar moved through Egypt, he took all of Egypt's distinguished and useful inhabitants into exile in his Babylonian Empire. That did not mean that they had to move very far. We must remember that Nebuchadnezzar was the first to dig out what today we know as the Suez Canal. He had cedars of Lebanon that he needed to float to Babylon for his building projects and these Egyptians were snatched from their homes and put in forced labor on the canal program. When that was completed, the Egyptians were scattered throughout the Babylonian Empire.

e) Egypt's Return

29:13 'For thus says the Lord GOD, "At the end of forty years I will gather the Egyptians from the peoples among whom they were scattered. 29:14 "I will turn the fortunes of Egypt and make them return to the land of Pathros, to the land of their origin, and there they will be a lowly kingdom. 29:15 "It will be the lowest of the kingdoms, and it will never again lift itself up above the nations. And I will make them so small that they will not rule over the nations. 29:16 "And it will never again be the confidence of the house of Israel, bringing to mind the iniquity of their having turned to Egypt. Then they will know that I am the LORD GOD.'"

The devastation of the land of Egypt at the hands of Nebuchadnezzar began in 572 BC with his arrival in Migdol in the delta near the Mediterranean Sea. Slowly, Nebuchadnezzar moved south until he had exerted his strength across the entire land all the way to Aswan. Nevertheless, the exiles were moved into his kingdom as he moved south. When Cyrus the Great of Persia captured the Babylonian Empire in 536 BC, he began to allow the Jews to return to the Promised Land first. Then, four years into his reign in the

new empire he allowed the Egyptians to return to their home, starting near the Aswan area in 532 BC.⁵⁴ This vision has been fulfilled.

G. Vision Seven – (29:17 – 30:19) 27th Year, 1st Day, 1st Month (Nebuchadnezzar and Tyre)

Ezekiel's Forty-fourth Assignment from the LORD - Tyre

29:17 Now in the twenty-seventh year, in the first month, on the first of the month, **the word of the LORD came to me** saying, **29:18** "Son of man, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon made his army labor hard against Tyre; every head was made bald and every shoulder was rubbed bare. But he and his army had no wages from Tyre for the labor that he had performed against it." **29:19** Therefore thus says the Lord GOD, "Behold, I will 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. **29:20** "I have given him the land of Egypt for his labor which he performed, because they acted for Me," declares the Lord GOD. **29:21** "On that day I will make a horn sprout for the house of Israel, and I will open your mouth in their midst. Then they will **know that I am the LORD.**"

Ezekiel, as he recorded the visions in his book, put the book's sixth vision after the fifth when chronologically they should have been reversed. Nevertheless, Ezekiel did this purposely to put the actual events of the vision in chronological order rather than the giving of the prophecy. Here, in the seventh vision in the book, we face the same situation in reverse. This vision was given in the **"twenty-seventh year, in the first month, on the first of the month."** It was not the last vision given to Ezekiel in his ministry as some have proposed. The reckoning point for purposes of dating had changed. The contents of this vision would be the next important message because it addressed the reason Egypt was taken by Nebuchadnezzar.

Counting from Ezekiel's call and the placing of Zedekiah on the throne of the Southern Kingdom in 597 BC, this seventh vision occurred in 570 BC. This accounting of years should look familiar; it was the same year as the death of Hophra in vision six. By this time in the story, Zedekiah had been off the throne in Egypt for sixteen years. Therefore, the reckoning of the years needed to change for this vision.

What was the purpose of the attack on Egypt? Nebuchadnezzar's soldiers needed to be paid! The LORD told Ezekiel about Nebuchadnezzar's army in Tyre, **"every head was made bald and every shoulder was rubbed bare. But he and his army had no wages from Tyre for the labor that he had performed against it."** It took thirteen years for Nebuchadnezzar to destroy the old city of Tyre. Everything in that city that survived was hauled into the sea to try to make a bridge to the new city of Tyre, but without success. Remember, the LORD said even the gold and silver were dumped in the sea. Nothing was left for the payment of the soldiers. To pay them, Nebuchadnezzar turned his attention to the wealthy land of Egypt. He started at the delta of the Nile and progressed south to the border of Ethiopia.

Ezekiel's Forty-fifth Assignment from the LORD – Egypt

1. Nations Included

30:1 The **word of the LORD came again to me** saying, **30:2** "Son of man, prophesy and say, 'Thus says the Lord GOD, "Wail, 'Alas for the day!' **30:3** "For the day is near, Even the day of the LORD is near; It will be a day of clouds, A time of doom for the nations. **30:4** "A sword will come upon Egypt, And anguish will be in Ethiopia; When the slain fall in Egypt, They take away her wealth, And her foundations are torn down. **30:5** "Ethiopia, Put, Lud, all Arabia, Libya and the people of the land that is in league will fall with them by the sword." **30:6** 'Thus says the LORD, "Indeed, those who support

⁵⁴ Herod. lib. 3 c. 10; and see Calmet.

Egypt will fall And the pride of her power will come down; From Migdol to Syene They will fall within her by the sword," Declares the Lord GOD.

The wealth of Egypt was not enough to pay all the soldiers of Nebuchadnezzar's army. More was needed. As he marched his army to each of the borders of Egypt, Nebuchadnezzar saw the promise of wealth beyond and he took advantage of each surrounding country. Ethiopia saw Nebuchadnezzar coming first. Then all the countries that needed Egypt, her trade and protection to survive, were at risk including "Ethiopia, Put, Lud, all Arabia, Libya and the people of the land that is in league" with Egypt.

2. Nations Attacked

30:7 "They be desolate In the midst of the desolated lands; And her cities will be In the midst of the devastated cities. 30:8 "And they will know that I am the LORD, When I set a fire in Egypt And all her helpers are broken. 30:9 "On that day messengers will go forth from Me in ships to frighten secure Ethiopia; and anguish will be on them as on the day of Egypt; for behold, it comes!" 30:10 'Thus says the Lord GOD, "I will also make the hordes of Egypt cease By the hand of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon. 30:11 "He and his people with him, The most ruthless of the nations, Will be brought in to destroy the land; And they will draw their swords against Egypt And fill the land with the slain. 30:12 "Moreover, I will make the Nile canals dry And sell the land into the hands of evil men. And I will make the land desolate And all that is in it, By the hand of strangers; I the LORD have spoken." 30:13 'Thus says the Lord GOD, "I will also destroy the idols And make the images cease from Memphis. And there will no longer be a prince in the land of Egypt; And I will put fear in the land of Egypt. 30:14 "I will make Pathros desolate, Set a fire in Zoan And execute judgments on Thebes. 30:15 "I will pour out My wrath on Sin, The stronghold of Egypt; I will also cut off the hordes of Thebes. 30:16 "I will set a fire in Egypt; Sin will writhe in anguish, Thebes will be breached And Memphis will have distresses daily. 30:17 "The young men of On and of Pi-beseth Will fall by the sword, And the women will go into captivity. 30:18 "In Tehaphnehes the day will be dark When I break there the yoke bars of Egypt. Then the pride of her power will cease in her; A cloud will cover her, And her daughters will go into captivity. 30:19 "Thus I will execute judgments on Egypt, And they will know that I am the LORD.""

Much could be made in commentaries about this vision, but the best position to understand from its context is that no nation or city under the control of Egypt was safe from the march of Nebuchadnezzar. In the year of this vision, Nebuchadnezzar conquered the land, sent captives into exile and placed Egyptians in forced labor for work projects.

H. Vision Eight – (30:20 - 26) 11th Year, 7th Day, 1st Month

Ezekiel's Forty-sixth Assignment from the LORD – Egypt

1. The Next Date

30:20 In the eleventh year, in the first month, on the seventh of the month, the word of the LORD came to me saying,

If the fifth vision was given on the first day of the first month of the eleventh year as we have proposed, then this eighth vision was given six days later on the seventh day of the first month of the eleventh year. It was also given fifty-four days after the sixth vision. At the time of this eighth vision, the seventh vision of the 27th year had not yet been given. This eighth vision laid the seeds of prophecy for the fulfillment and prophecy found in the seventh vision. The topic is the same.

a) The Broken Arm of the Pharaoh

30:21 "Son of man, I have broken the arm of Pharaoh king of Egypt; and, behold, it has not been bound up for healing or wrapped with a bandage, that it may be strong to

hold the sword. 30:22 "Therefore thus says the Lord GOD, 'Behold, I am against Pharaoh king of Egypt and will break his arms, both the strong and the broken; and I will make the sword fall from his hand.

As we discovered in vision six, Hophra, also known as Apries, was the Pharaoh of Egypt. He began his reign in 589 BC. Counting from the beginning of Zedekiah's reign in 597 BC, as all the visions have been counted, Hophra became Pharaoh in the eighth year of Zedekiah's reign. At the time of this vision, Hophra had been Pharaoh for just three years. Hophra would be Pharaoh for sixteen more years but at some time, most likely in the last four years of his reign, Hophra's arm was broken by his general, Amasis. Hophra ran for safety in the upper mountains in southern Egypt. The LORD had planned this demise of Hophra. No doubt He had sent Amasis to torment Hophra. The LORD did not intend to help Hophra in any way.

b) The Strong Arm of Babylon

30:23 'I will scatter the Egyptians among the nations and disperse them among the lands. 30:24 'For I will strengthen the arms of the king of Babylon and put My sword in his hand; and I will break the arms of Pharaoh, so that he will groan before him with the groanings of a wounded man. 30:25 'Thus I will strengthen the arms of the king of Babylon, but the arms of Pharaoh will fall. Then they will know that I am the LORD, when I put My sword into the hand of the king of Babylon and he stretches it out against the land of Egypt. 30:26 'When I scatter the Egyptians among the nations and disperse them among the lands, then they will know that I am the LORD.'"

With Hophra broken and on the run from his own general, the nation did not have a strong leader in place. With the work at Tyre completed, as much as Nebuchadnezzar could complete by 572 BC, Nebuchadnezzar turned his attention to the weakened Egypt. By action of the LORD, the arm of Nebuchadnezzar was strengthened and the arm of Hophra was broken. All the action of government in Egypt was centered in southern Egypt where Hophra was on the run from Amasis. Nebuchadnezzar had entered Egypt in the north area of the delta of the Nile River by the Mediterranean Sea. Nebuchadnezzar had turned on Egypt to take spoils from the wealth of the nation to pay his soldiers. Amasis had turned on Hophra to take the spoil of the throne for himself. Some proclaimed Amasis had become Pharaoh prematurely. Nevertheless, in the battle of Aswan in 570 BC, Amasis killed Hophra and became the Pharaoh of Egypt. His power was limited by the march of Nebuchadnezzar through Egypt, but he was left on the throne as a prefect to the Babylonian Empire. He served Egypt and Babylon until 526 BC, forty-four years.

When general Amasis became Pharaoh over Egypt in 570 BC, he took the name *Ahmose II*. History has a wonderful sense of humor. As *Ahmose II*, he presided as the Egyptian Pharaoh to see the final exile of Israel from the Promised Land. *Ahmose I* of Egypt held just such an interesting position. It was the daughter of *Ahmose I* who drew the baby Moses from the bulrushes and adopted the child into the family of the Pharaoh about 1545 BC. That same Moses would lead the Israelites out of Egypt and into the Promised Land.

Under the reign of Amasis, (*Ahmose II*), Nebuchadnezzar would scatter thousands of Egyptians into exile for labor projects of the Babylonian Empire.