EZEKIEL 19

Lament for the Princes: Lions Caged, Vine Burned

> *“And fire has gone out from its branch; It has consumed its shoots and fruit, So that there is not in it a strong branch, A scepter to rule.”*
> EZEKIEL 19:14

Where Ezekiel has brought us

1. Ezekiel is among the exiles in Babylon, taken there with King Jehoiachin in 597 BC.

2. Chapter 17 has just warned that Zedekiah's rebellion against Babylon would fail and that he would die in Babylon.

The Lioness and Her First Cub

A funeral song begins: a young lion learns to devour and is dragged to Egypt

EZEKIEL 19:2

and say, 'What was your mother? A lioness among lions! She lay down among young lions, She reared her cubs.

DAVID GUZIK

Guzik calls the chapter 'the collection of two laments' and notes that it imitates a funeral dirge.

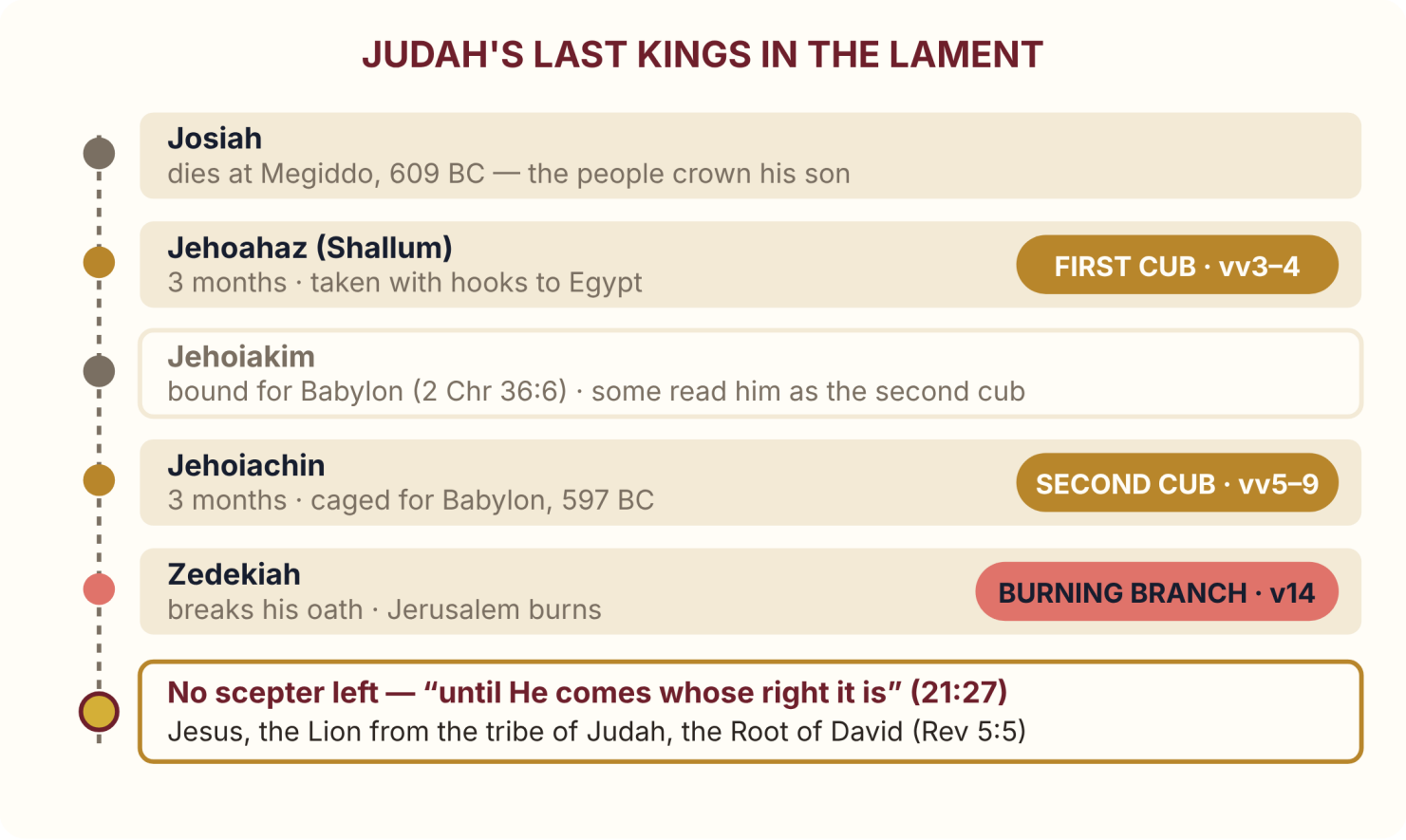
WHAT IT MEANS

The lion was Judah's emblem from the start: 'Judah is a lion's whelp' (Gen 49:9).

qînāh (קִינָה)
QINAH · "LAMENTATION"

A dirge, a funeral song — the song mourners sang over the dead. The word frames the whole chapter: "take up a lamentation for the princes of Israel" (v1), and at the end, "This is a lamentation, and has become a lamentation" (v14).

Judah's Last Kings in the Lament



The cubs and the burning branch match Judah's last kings — until the empty throne is filled by the One whose right it is.

The Second Cub Caged for Babylon

Another young lion roars, lays waste cities, and is silenced in a cage

EZEKIEL 19:5

'When she saw, as she waited, That her hope was lost, She took another of her cubs And made him a young lion.

DAVID GUZIK

Guzik identifies the second cub: 'This was King Jehoiachin of Judah, who reigned for three months before being exiled to Babylon.'

WHAT IT MEANS

When the mother's "hope was lost," she raised another. Most read this second lion as Jehoiachin.

kəphîr (כְּפִיר)
KEPHIR · "YOUNG LION"

A young lion in full strength — no longer a cub but a lion at the height of its power. When the mother saw "That her hope was lost" (v5) — tiqvah (H8615), a cord, an expectation — she took another cub "And made him a young lion" (v5).

The Vine in Its Glory

A fruitful vine by abundant waters, with branches fit for scepters

EZEKIEL 19:10

'Your mother was like a vine in your vineyard, Planted by the waters; It was fruitful and full of branches Because of abundant waters.

DAVID GUZIK

Guzik says the vine imagery here recalls Israel's most glorious years under David and Solomon — well-watered, fruitful, full of branches, its height "raised above the clouds" (v11).

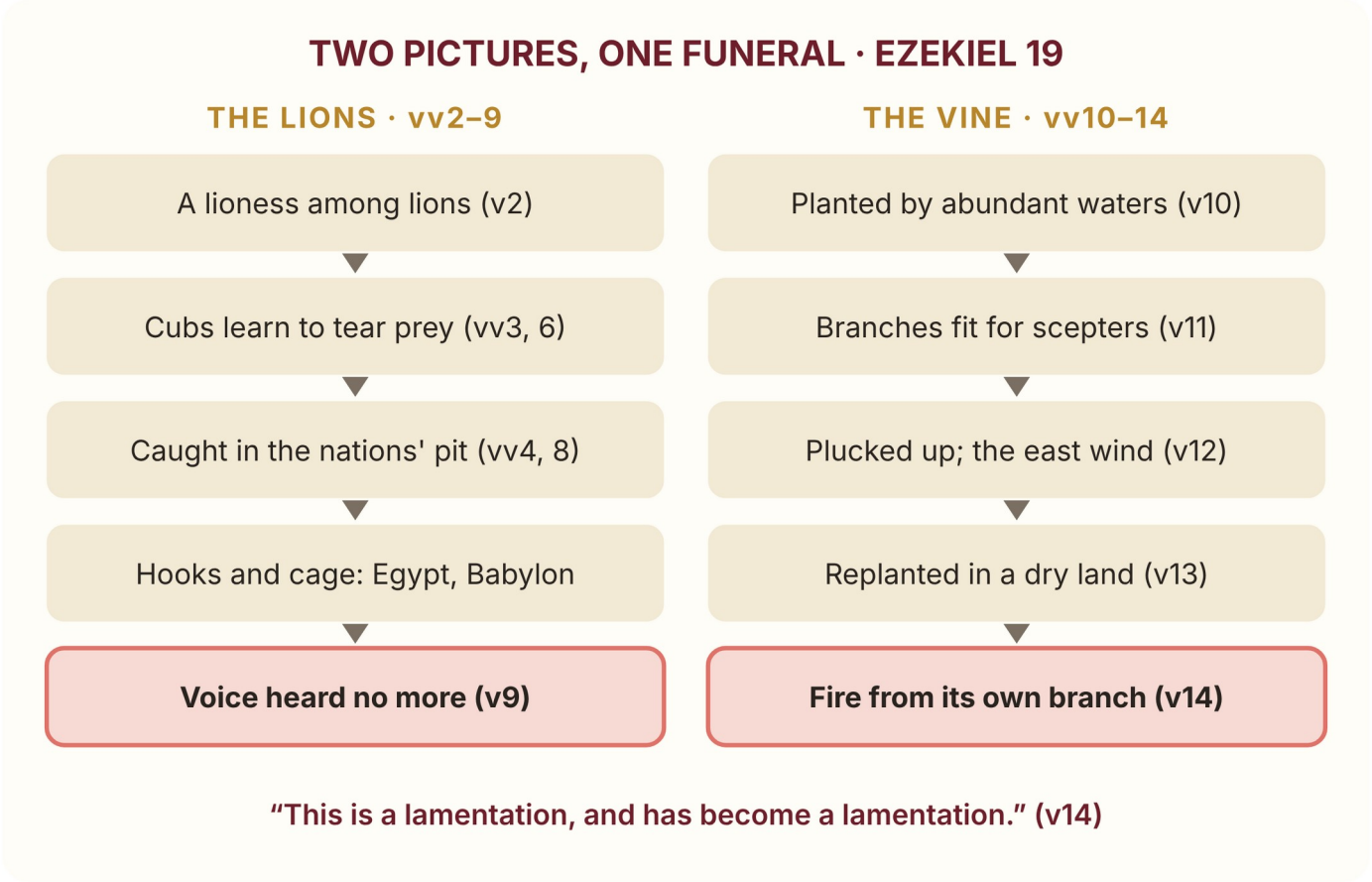
WHAT IT MEANS

The picture shifts from lions to a vine. Israel as God's vine is a familiar image (Ps 80:8–16; Isa 5:1–7; Ezek 15; 17).

shēbeṭ (שֵׁבֶט)
SHEBET · "SCEPTER"

A rod, a scepter; also a tribe. The vine had "strong branches fit for scepters of rulers" (v11) — its rods (matteh, H4294) were meant to become shebet, the royal scepter.

Two Pictures, One Funeral



Both halves of the dirge move from glory to ruin: the lions end caged and silent, the vine ends burned with no scepter (vv2–14).

Plucked Up, Burned by Its Own Branch

The east wind, exile in a dry land, and fire from within

EZEKIEL 19:12

'But it was plucked up in fury; It was cast down to the ground; And the east wind dried up its fruit. Its strong branch was torn off So that it withered; The fire consumed it.

DAVID GUZIK

Guzik names the burning branch: 'This particular rod of her branches represents Zedekiah, who was king at the destruction of Jerusalem in 587 B.C.'

WHAT IT MEANS

"But it was plucked up in fury" (v12) — God's anger at covenant-breaking. The east wind, the hot desert wind, is Babylon (compare 17:10): it dried up the fruit, the strong branch was torn off, and fire consumed it.

maṭṭeh (מַטֶּה)
MATTEH · "BRANCH"

A rod, a staff, a branch; also a tribe. In v11 the vine's strong branches were fit for scepters.

What to carry from this chapter

1

A funeral before the burial.

Ezekiel sings a dirge over Judah's kings while Zedekiah still sits on the throne (v1).

2

Two laments.

Guzik calls the chapter ‘the collection of two laments’ — first the lions, then the vine.

3

God grieves over failed leaders.

Alexander, in Guzik: ‘Ezekiel expressed the Lord's sadness over the Judean leadership's failure by chanting this elegy.’

4

Devouring is learned.

Both young lions “learned to tear his prey” (vv3, 6) — a predator is made one choice at a time.

More to carry

5

Hope is a cord.

tiqvah (H8615) means a cord, an expectation — and the lioness saw that hers was lost (v5).

6

Great in their own eyes.

Wiersbe, in Guzik: ‘these two kings of Judah thought themselves to be great leaders, but they ignored the Word of God.’

7

Rod, scepter, tribe.

matteh (H4294) and shebet (H7626) both mean a rod — the branch meant to rule became the branch that burned (vv11, 14).

8

The enemy within.

Guzik: ‘The worst damage to the vine came from one of her own branches.’

Talk it through

1. God told Ezekiel to lament the princes, not mock them. When a man you know wrecks his life, do you grieve before God or talk about him?

2. Both young lions “learned to tear his prey.” What did you learn to do to survive that now hurts the people around you?

3. The vine was fruitful “Because of abundant waters.” In your good seasons, how do you keep remembering where the water comes from?

4. The fire came “from its branch.” What inside you is a bigger threat than anything outside?

5. The song ends with no scepter left. How does Jesus, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, answer that empty throne?

CLOSING

Ezekiel's song ends with no strong branch and no scepter. But God's promise did not die with Zedekiah: the throne waited for Jesus, the Lion of Judah, who does not devour His people but lays down His life for them. Stay connected to Him, the true Vine.

Teaching the Word. Watching the Times. — Smith For Christ

O·I·A study, slides and reflection journal: see the Ezekiel study page.