Ezekiel 32

The Monster in the Net: Egypt's Funeral Song

OBSERVATION · INTERPRETATION · APPLICATION

"These were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so."

Acts 17:11

CHAPTER THEME

God writes Pharaoh's funeral song while Pharaoh is still alive. The king who saw himself as a lion is really a thrashing crocodile muddying the river, and God will haul him out in His net. Then Ezekiel walks us through the graveyard of empires — Assyria, Elam, Meshech, Edom, Sidon — every one of them once feared, every one now lying in shame. Pharaoh's only comfort will be that he has company.

Ed Smith · Started 20 October 2026

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00 The Text

EZEKIEL 32 (KJV), MARKED

▲ Gold God — His character & actions | Green Command / instruction | ⇄ Sky Key repeated word

⚠ Rose Sin / warning | ★ Violet Promise / blessing | ◷ Amber Time / place / contrast

1 And it came to pass ◷ in the twelfth year, in the twelfth month, in the first day of the month, that the word of the LORD came unto me, saying,

2 Son of man, take up a ⇄ lamentation for Pharaoh king of Egypt, and say unto him, ⚠ Thou art like a young lion of the nations, and thou art as a whale in the seas: and thou camest forth with thy rivers, and ⚠ troubledst the waters with thy feet, and fouledst their rivers.

3 Thus saith the Lord GOD; ▲ I will therefore spread out my net over thee with a company of many people; and they shall bring thee up in my net.

4 Then will I leave thee upon the land, I will cast thee forth upon the open field, and will cause all the fowls of the heaven to remain upon thee, and I will fill the beasts of the whole earth with thee.

5 And I will lay thy flesh upon the mountains, and fill the valleys with thy height.

6 I will also water with thy blood the land wherein thou swimmest, even to the mountains; and the rivers shall be full of thee.

7 And when I shall put thee out, ▲ I will cover the heaven, and make the stars thereof dark; I will cover the sun with a cloud, and the moon shall not give her light.

8 All the bright lights of heaven will I make dark over thee, and set darkness upon thy land, saith the Lord GOD.

9 I will also vex the hearts of many people, when I shall bring thy destruction among the nations, into the countries which thou hast not known.

10 Yea, I will make many people amazed at thee, and their kings shall be horribly afraid for thee, ▲ when I shall brandish my sword before them; and they shall tremble at every moment, every man for his own life, in the day of thy fall.

11 For thus saith the Lord GOD; ◷ The sword of the king of Babylon shall come upon thee.

12 By the swords of the mighty will I cause thy multitude to fall, the terrible of the nations, all of them: and ⚠ they shall spoil the pomp of Egypt, and all the multitude thereof shall be destroyed.

13 I will destroy also all the beasts thereof from beside the great waters; neither shall the foot of man trouble them any more, nor the hoofs of beasts trouble them.

14 Then will I make their waters deep, and ★ cause their rivers to run like oil, saith the Lord GOD.

15 When I shall make the land of Egypt desolate, and the country shall be destitute of that whereof it was full, when I shall smite all them that dwell therein, ▲ then shall they know that I am the LORD.

16 This is the ⇄ lamentation wherewith they shall ⇄ lament her: the daughters of the nations shall ⇄ lament her: they shall ⇄ lament for her, even for Egypt, and for all her multitude, saith the Lord GOD.

17 It came to pass also ◷ in the twelfth year, in the fifteenth day of the month, that the word of the LORD came unto me, saying,

18 Son of man, wail for the multitude of Egypt, and cast them down, even her, and the daughters of the famous nations, unto the nether parts of the earth, with them that go down into the pit.

19 Whom dost thou pass in beauty? go down, and be thou laid with the uncircumcised.

20 They shall fall in the midst of them that are slain by the sword: she is delivered to the sword: draw her and all her multitudes.

21 The strong among the mighty shall speak to him out of the midst of hell with them that help him: they are gone down, they lie uncircumcised, slain by the sword.

22 Asshur is there and all her company: his graves are about him: all of them slain, fallen by the sword:

23 Whose graves are set in the sides of the pit, and her company is round about her grave: all of them slain, fallen by the sword, which caused terror in the land of the living.

24 There is Elam and all her multitude round about her grave, all of them slain, fallen by the sword, which are gone down uncircumcised into the nether parts of the earth, which caused their terror in the land of the living; yet have they borne their shame with them that go down to the pit.

25 They have set her a bed in the midst of the slain with all her multitude: her graves are round about him: all of them uncircumcised, slain by the sword: though their terror was caused in the land of the living, yet have they borne their shame with them that go down to the pit: he is put in the midst of them that be slain.

26 There is Meshech, Tubal, and all her multitude: her graves are round about him: all of them uncircumcised, slain by the sword, though they caused their terror in the land of the living.

27 And they shall not lie with the mighty that are fallen of the uncircumcised, which are gone down to hell with their weapons of war: and they have laid their swords under their heads, but their iniquities shall be upon their bones, though they were the terror of the mighty in the land of the living.

28 Yea, thou shalt be broken in the midst of the uncircumcised, and shalt lie with them that are slain with the sword.

29 There is Edom, her kings, and all her princes, which with their might are laid by them that were slain by the sword: they shall lie with the uncircumcised, and with them that go down to the pit.

30 There be the princes of the north, all of them, and all the Zidonians, which are gone down with the slain; with their terror they are ashamed of their might; and they lie uncircumcised with them that be slain by the sword, and bear their shame with them that go down to the pit.

31 Pharaoh shall see them, and shall be comforted over all his multitude, even Pharaoh and all his army slain by the sword, saith the Lord GOD.

32 For I have caused my terror in the land of the living: and he shall be laid in the midst of the uncircumcised with them that are slain with the sword, even Pharaoh and all his multitude, saith the Lord GOD.

Marked in the text

- **v1** in the twelfth year, in the twelfth month
- **v2** lament *(every occurrence)*
- **v2** take up a lamentation for Pharaoh king of Egypt
- **v2** Thou art like a young lion of the nations
- **v2** troubledst the waters with thy feet
- **v3** I will therefore spread out my net over thee
- **v7** I will cover the heaven, and make the stars thereof dark

- **v10** ▲ when I shall brandish my sword before them
- **v11** ◷ The sword of the king of Babylon shall come upon thee
- **v12** ⚠ they shall spoil the pomp of Egypt
- **v14** ★ cause their rivers to run like oil
- **v15** ▲ then shall they know that I am the LORD
- **v17** ◷ in the twelfth year, in the fifteenth day of the month
- **v18** ▮▮ wail for the multitude of Egypt
- **v18** ◷ them that go down into the pit
- **v19** ⚠ Whom dost thou pass in beauty
- **v19** ⇄ uncircumcised *(every occurrence)*
- **v20** ⇄ slain by the sword *(every occurrence)*
- **v22** ◷ Asshur is there and all her company
- **v23** ◷ land of the living *(every occurrence)*
- **v24** ⚠ borne their shame *(every occurrence)*
- **v27** ⚠ their iniquities shall be upon their bones
- **v31** ◷ Pharaoh shall see them, and shall be comforted
- **v32** ▲ For I have caused my terror in the land of the living

Marks are drawn on the KJV text. Quotations in the notes are from the NASB95, so their wording may differ from the KJV above.

01 Observation

WHAT DOES THE TEXT SAY?

KEY VERSE · EZEKIEL 32:2 (KJV)

2 Son of man, take up a ⇄ lamentation for Pharaoh king of Egypt, and say unto him, ⚠ Thou art like a young lion of the nations, and thou art as a whale in the seas: and thou camest forth with thy rivers, and ⚠ troubledst the waters with thy feet, and fouledst their rivers.

Setting

Two dated oracles close Ezekiel's prophecies against Egypt. The first: "In the twelfth year, in the twelfth month, on the first of the month" (v1) — about March 585 BC. The second: "In the twelfth year, on the fifteenth of the month" (v17); no month is named, and Guzik notes that most agree it is the same month, two weeks later. Jerusalem has already fallen (33:21 reports the news reaching the exiles). Judah's hope in Egypt has failed, and Egypt is still standing — and likely proud of it.

Structure

- vv1–2 — **a funeral song for a living king:** "Son of man, take up a lamentation over Pharaoh king of Egypt and say to him, 'You compared yourself to a young lion of the nations, yet you are like the monster in the seas'" (v2). He "muddied the waters with your feet and fouled their rivers" (v2).
- vv3–8 — **the monster caught and darkness falls:** "Now I will spread My net over you with a company of many peoples" (v3). "I will leave you on the land; I will cast you on the open field" (v4). "I will also make the land drink the discharge of your blood" (v6). "And when I extinguish you, I will cover the heavens and darken their stars" (v7); "All the shining lights in the heavens I will darken over you and will set darkness on your land" (v8).
- vv9–10 — **the nations tremble:** "I will make many peoples appalled at you ... when I brandish My sword before them" (v10). They "tremble every moment, every man for his own life, on the day of

your fall" (v10).

- vv11–16 — **the sword of Babylon:** "The sword of the king of Babylon will come upon you" (v11). "They will devastate the pride of Egypt, and all its hordes will be destroyed" (v12). "Then I will make their waters settle and will cause their rivers to run like oil" (v14). "Then they shall know that I am the LORD" (v15). "This is a lamentation and they shall chant it" (v16).
- vv17–21 — **Egypt sent down to the pit:** "Son of man, wail for the hordes of Egypt and bring it down … to the nether world, with those who go down to the pit" (v18). "Whom do you surpass in beauty? Go down and make your bed with the uncircumcised" (v19). The mighty "speak of him and his helpers from the midst of Sheol" (v21).
- vv22–30 — **the nations already there:** "Assyria is there and all her company; her graves are round about her" (v22). Elam (vv24–25), Meshech and Tubal (vv26–27), Edom (v29), "the chiefs of the north, all of them, and all the Sidonians" (v30). Each once "spread terror in the land of the living" (v23); each now "bore their disgrace with those who went down to the pit" (v24).
- vv31–32 — **Pharaoh's cold comfort:** "These Pharaoh will see, and he will be comforted for all his hordes slain by the sword" (v31). "Though I instilled a terror of him in the land of the living, yet he will be made to lie down among the uncircumcised" (v32).

Repeated words

lamentation (vv2, 16); hordes (vv12, 16, 18, 20, 24, 25, 26, 31, 32); sword / swords (vv10, 11, 12, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32); uncircumcised (vv19, 21, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 32); pit (vv18, 23, 24, 25, 29, 30); terror (vv23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 30, 32); land of the living (vv23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 32); graves (vv22, 23, 25, 26); disgrace (vv24, 25, 30); Sheol (vv21, 27).

Contrasts

"a young lion of the nations" (v2) ⟷ "the monster in the seas" caught in God's net (vv2–3). Muddied, fouled rivers (v2) ⟷ rivers that "run like oil" (v14). Shining lights (v8) ⟷ darkness on the land (v8). Terror "in the land of the living" (v23) ⟷ disgrace in the pit (v24). "Whom do you surpass in beauty?" (v19) ⟷ "make your bed with the uncircumcised" (v19). Pharaoh's terror (v32) ⟷ "I instilled a terror of him" — God gave it and God ends it.

Chapter theme (my words)

God writes Pharaoh's funeral song while Pharaoh is still alive. The king who saw himself as a lion is really a thrashing crocodile muddying the river, and God will haul him out in His net. Then Ezekiel walks us through the graveyard of empires — Assyria, Elam, Meshech, Edom, Sidon — every one of them once feared, every one now lying in shame. Pharaoh's only comfort will be that he has company.

02 Interpretation

WHAT DOES THE TEXT MEAN?

KEY VERSE · EZEKIEL 32:3 (KJV)

3 Thus saith the Lord GOD; ▲ I will therefore spread out my net over thee with a company of many people; and they shall bring thee up in my net.

Lion or crocodile? (vv1–2)

The "lamentation" (*qinah*) is a funeral dirge, sung here in advance. Pharaoh "compared yourself to a young lion of the nations" — that was his self-image. God says he's really "the monster in the seas" (*tannim*), the same word used for Pharaoh in 29:3. Wright, in Guzik, contrasts Pharaoh's regard for himself as a lion with what he really is — a crocodile thrashing about and stirring up mud. Some interpreters also hear an echo of the ancient sea-dragon of chaos that God subdues (compare Isa 51:9). Egypt was the second power of the age, behind only Babylon, which had beaten it at Carchemish in 605 BC.

The net and the darkness (vv3–8)

A crocodile is caught with a net and dragged onto dry land, where it dies and the birds and beasts feed (vv3–6). Guzik cites Poole that Hophra's soldiers left dead in the Libyan deserts literally fulfilled this. The blood watering the land recalls the first plague on Egypt (Exod 7:19), and the darkness recalls the ninth (Exod 10:21–23). "When I extinguish you" (v7) speaks of death — putting out a light. Alexander, in Guzik, notes the point for Egypt: its sun gods would be shown powerless. The language of darkened sun, moon and stars is used across the prophets for the fall of nations and for the Day of the LORD (Isa 13:10; Joel 2:10; Matt 24:29).

The nations tremble (vv9–10)

When God brandishes His sword, kings far away shake "every man for his own life" (v10). If Egypt can fall, anyone can.

The sword of Babylon (vv11–16)

God names His instrument: "The sword of the king of Babylon" (v11). Guzik notes that skeptics question whether Babylon ever conquered Egypt, since secular confirmation is thin. He cites Feinberg's answer that the silence of Greek historians like Herodotus proves nothing and that Egyptians covered up their disasters; Feinberg adds, "Some consider the prophecy as completely fulfilled." Historically, Hophra was overthrown by his own general Amasis after a failed campaign in Libya, and a Babylonian text records Nebuchadnezzar campaigning against Egypt in his 37th year (about 568 BC). With the monster gone, the waters "settle" and the rivers "run like oil" (v14) — no more feet stirring up the mud. "This is a lamentation and they shall chant it" (v16): the nations will sing Egypt's funeral song.

Down to the pit (vv17–21)

Two weeks later comes the seventh and last oracle against Egypt. Ezekiel is told to "wail for the hordes of Egypt and bring it down" (v18) — the prophet's word itself sends Egypt down. "Whom do you surpass in beauty?" (v19) answers the question of 31:2. In Sheol, Egypt must "make your bed with the

uncircumcised" — a disgrace for a people who practiced circumcision and obsessed over proper burial.

The graveyard of empires (vv22–30)

Ezekiel tours the underworld like a cemetery: Assyria (vv22–23); Elam, east of Babylon (vv24–25); Meshech and Tubal in the far north (vv26–27); Edom (v29); the chiefs of the north and the Sidonians (v30). Guzik notes the uncertainty about Meshech and Tubal; Feinberg lists Hittite and Scythian identifications others have proposed. The refrain repeats: they "spread terror in the land of the living" (v23) and now bear "their disgrace with those who went down to the pit" (v24). Even the warriors buried with honor, swords under their heads, cannot escape: "the punishment for their iniquity rested on their bones" (v27).

What does this teach about the dead?

Christians read this vision in two main ways. Some take it as poetic imagery — a dramatic way of saying that the proud nations are dead and disgraced — and caution against building a detailed doctrine of the afterlife from it. Others see in it real teaching that the dead are conscious and that judgment follows death (compare Luke 16:23; Heb 9:27). Guzik holds both together: the passage is poetic and reflects the Old Testament's limited view of the afterlife, yet it shows the dead in Sheol as conscious and aware of their standing. Trapp, in Guzik, links it to the rich man in Luke 16:23.

Pharaoh "comforted" (vv31–32)

Pharaoh will see the others and "be comforted" (v31) — the grim consolation of not being alone in ruin. Wright, in Guzik: "This is the only consolation Pharaoh can find." Clarke, in Guzik, notes that the king who claimed to be a god will lie among "the vulgar dead." And the last word belongs to God: "I instilled a terror of him in the land of the living" (v32). Even Pharaoh's power to frighten was on loan from God.

Word study (Hebrew)

- **lamentation — *qinah* (H7015):** a dirge, funeral song.
- **young lion — *kephir* (H3715):** a young, strong lion in its prime.
- **monster — *tannin* (H8577):** a sea monster, dragon, serpent; here likely the crocodile.
- **muddied — *raphas* (H7515):** to trample, foul water by stamping in it.
- **net — *resheth* (H7568):** a net for catching animals.
- **darken — *qadar* (H6937):** to be dark, to mourn.
- **appalled — *shamem* (H8074):** to be desolate, stunned, horrified.
- **pride — *gaon* (H1347):** majesty, pride, arrogance.
- **hordes — *hamon* (H1995):** a multitude, crowd, tumult.
- **sword — *chereb* (H2719):** a sword; war.
- **uncircumcised — *arel* (H6189):** outside the covenant; unclean.
- **pit — *bor* (H953):** a pit, cistern; the grave.
- **terror — *chittith* (H2851):** dread, terror — used only in Ezekiel (26:17; 32:23–32).
- **disgrace — *kelimmah* (H3639):** shame, humiliation.
- **iniquity — *avon* (H5771):** guilt, iniquity, its punishment.

- **comforted — *nacham* (H5162):** to be consoled; to be sorry.

Cross-references

Exod 7:19; Exod 10:21–23; Job 41:1–2; Ps 74:13–14; Isa 13:10; Isa 14:9–11; Isa 27:1; Isa 51:9; Jer 46:13–26; Ezek 26:19–21; Ezek 29:3–5; Ezek 31:15–18; Joel 2:10; Matt 24:29; Luke 12:20; Luke 16:22–26; Heb 9:27; Rev 20:12–15.

03 Application

HOW DOES IT CHANGE ME?

KEY VERSE · EZEKIEL 32:18 (KJV)

18 Son of man, wail for the multitude of Egypt, and cast them down, even her, and the daughters of the famous nations, unto the nether parts of the earth, with them that go down into the pit.

Command to obey — "take up a lamentation."

God told Ezekiel to wail over Egypt (vv2, 18) — Judah's broken ally, not a friend. God doesn't call me to gloat over the fall of the proud, but to grieve. When a man I know loses everything because of his pride, my first response should be tears and prayer, not "I told you so."

Sin to confess — the lion I imagine myself to be

Pharaoh "compared yourself to a young lion," but God saw a crocodile muddying the water (v2). I confess the gap between how I see myself and how God sees me. Where have I been stirring up mud — in my home, my work, my relationships — while telling myself I'm strong?

Warning to heed — terror in the land of the living, shame in the pit

Every nation in this graveyard was feared once (v23). Then came the grave, where swords under the head mean nothing and "the punishment for their iniquity rested on their bones" (v27). Many men I disciple once ran the yard or the block. Reputation, fear and toughness don't go past the grave. "It is appointed for men to die once and after this comes judgment" (Heb 9:27).

Promise to trust — God settles the waters

After the monster is taken, God says, "I will make their waters settle" (v14). For the man whose life has been churned to mud — addiction, chaos, violence, the noise of his own thrashing — God can still the water. He catches the monster we can't, including the one inside us (Isa 27:1).

Example to follow — Ezekiel's faithful word

Ezekiel delivered a hard, unpopular message to the most powerful king in the region, from a refugee camp in Babylon. He didn't soften it. When I write, teach or sit across from a man, I want to speak God's truth plainly — the bad news of judgment so that the good news of Christ makes sense.

Worship

The Lord GOD spreads His net over kings. He darkens the stars and stills the rivers. He gives power and takes it back, and every nation will know that He is the LORD. I worship the God who holds the keys of death and Hades (Rev 1:18).

Prayer

Lord GOD, You see me as I really am. Strip away the lion I pretend to be, and stop me from muddying the waters around me. Give me tears for the proud who are falling, and courage to warn them while they are still in the land of the living. Thank You that in Christ I don't have to go down to the pit in shame. Amen.