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EZEKIEL 19: 1 Moreover, take up a lamentation for the princes of Israel,

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This chapter contains two beautiful examples of the parabolic kind of writing; the one lamenting the sad catastrophe of Jehoahaz and Jehoiakim, Eze 19:1-9, and the other describing the desolation and captivity of the whole people, Eze 19:10-14. In the first parable, the lioness is Jerusalem. The first of the young lions is Jehoahaz, deposed by the king of Egypt; and the second lion is Jehoiakim, whose rebellion drew on himself the vengeance of the king of Babylon. In the second parable the vine is the Jewish nation, which long prospered, its land being fertile, its princes powerful, and its people flourishing; but the judgments of God, in consequence of their guilt, had now destroyed a great part of the people, and doomed the rest to captivity.

Verse 1

Moreover take thou up a lamentation - Declare what is the great subject of sorrow in Israel. Compose a funeral dirge. Show the melancholy fate of the kings who proceeded from Josiah. The prophet deplores the misfortune of Jehoahaz and Jehoiakim, under the figure of two lion whelps, which were taken by hunters, and confined in cages. Next he shows the desolation of Jerusalem under Zedekiah, which he compares to a beautiful vine pulled up by the roots, withered, and at last burned. Calmet justly observes, that the style of this song is beautiful, and the allegory well supported throughout.

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EZEKIEL 19: 2 and say, What was your mother? A lioness: she couched among lions, in the midst of the young lions she nourished her cubs.

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Verse 2

What is thy mother? A lioness - Judea may here be the mother; the lioness, Jerusalem. Her lying down among lions, her having confederacy with the neighboring kings; for lion here means king.

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EZEKIEL 19: 3 She brought up one of her cubs: he became a young lion, and he learned to catch the prey; he devoured men.

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Verse 3

She brought up one of her whelps - Jehoahaz, son of Josiah, whose father was conquered and slain by Pharaoh-necho, king of Egypt.

It learned to catch the prey - His reign was a reign of oppression and cruelty. He made his subjects his prey, and devoured their substance.

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EZEKIEL 19: 4 The nations also heard of him; he was taken in their pit; and they brought him with hooks to the land of Egypt.

Verse 4

The nations also heard of him - The king of Egypt, whose subjects were of divers nations, marched against Jerusalem, took Jehoahaz prisoner, and brought him to Egypt. Thus: -

He was taken in their pit - Here is an allusion to those trap-pits digged in forests, into which the wild beasts fall, when the huntsmen, surrounding a given portion of the forest, drive the beasts in; by degrees narrowing the inclosure, till the animals come to the place where the pits are, which, being lightly covered over with branches and turf, are not perceived, and the beasts tread on them and fall in. Jehoahaz reigned only three months before he was dethroned by the king of Egypt, against whom it is apparent some craft was used, here signified by the pit, into which he fell.

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EZEKIEL 19: 5 Now when she saw that she had waited, and her hope was lost, then she took another of her cubs, and made him a young lion.

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Verse 5

When she saw that she had waited - Being very weak, the Jews found that they could not resist with any hope of success; so the king of Egypt was permitted to do as he pleased.

She took another of her whelps - Jehoiakim.

And made him a young lion - King of Judea.

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EZEKIEL 19: 6 He went up and down among the lions; he became a young lion, and he learned to catch the prey; he devoured men.

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Verse 6

And he went up and down among the lions - He became a perfect heathen, and made Judea as idolatrous as any of the surrounding nations. He reigned eleven years, a monster of iniquity, 2Kgs 23:30, etc.

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EZEKIEL 19: 7 He knew their palaces, and laid waste their cities; and the land was desolate, and its fullness, because of the noise of his roaring.

EZEKIEL 19: 8 Then the nations set against him on every side from the provinces; and they spread their net over him; he was taken in their pit.

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Verse 8

The nations set against him - The Chaldeans, Syrians, Moabites, and Ammonites, and the king of Babylon - king of many nations.

He was taken - The city was taken by Nebuchadnezzar; and Jehoiakim was taken prisoner, and sent in chains to Babylon.

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EZEKIEL 19: 9 They put him in a cage with hooks, and brought him to the king of Babylon; they brought him into strongholds, that his voice should no more be heard on the mountains of Israel.

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#### Verse 9

That his voice should no more be heard - He continued in prison many years, till the reign of Evil-merodach, who set him at liberty, but never suffered him to return to the mountains of Israel. "The unhappy fate of these princes, mentioned Eze 19:4, Eze 19:8, Eze 19:9, is a just subject of lamentation." - Newcome.

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EZEKIEL 19: 10 Your mother was like a vine, in your blood, planted by the waters: it was fruitful and full of branches by reason of many waters.

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#### Verse 10

Thy mother (Jerusalem) is like a vine in thy blood - Of this expression I know not what to make. Some think the meaning is "A vine planted by the waters to produce the blood of the grape." See Deu 32:14. Others, for בדמך bedamecha, in thy blood, would read ברמון berimmon, in or at a pomegranate; like a vine planted by or beside a pomegranate-tree, by which it was to be supported. And so the Septuagint and Arabic appear to have read. Calmet reads כרמך carmecha, thy vineyard, instead of בדמך bedamecha, in thy blood. Here is no change but a ר resh for a ד dalet. This reading is supported by one of Kennicott's and one of De Rossi's MSS.: "Thy mother is like a vine in thy vineyard, planted by the waters." Though this is rather an unusual construction yet it seems the best emendation. Of the textual reading no sense can be made. There is a corruption somewhere.

Full on branches - Many princes. See next verse.

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EZEKIEL 19: 11 It had strong rods for the sceptres of those who bore rule, and their stature was exalted among the thick boughs, and they were seen in their height with the multitude of their branches.

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#### Verse 11

She had strong rods - Zedekiah, and his many sons.

Her stature was exalted - Zedekiah grew proud of his numerous offspring and prosperity; and although he copied the example of Jehoiakim, yet he thought he might safely rebel against the king of Babylon.

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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 rods were broken off and withered; the fire consumed them.

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Verse 12

But she was plucked up in fury - Jerusalem; taken after a violent and most destructive siege; Nebuchadnezzar being violently enraged against Zedekiah for breaking his oath to him.

She was cast down to the ground - Jerusalem was totally ruined, by being burned to the ground.

Her strong rods were broken - The children of Zedekiah were slain before his eyes, and after that his own eyes pulled out; and he was laden with chains, and carried into Babylon.

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EZEKIEL 19: 13 Now it is planted in the wilderness, in a dry and thirsty land.

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Verse 13

And now she is planted in the wilderness - In the land of Chaldea, whither the people have been carried captives; and which, compared with their own land, was to them a dreary wilderness.

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EZEKIEL 19: 14 Fire is gone out of the rods of its branches, it has devoured its fruit, so that there is in it no strong rod to be a sceptre to rule. This is a lamentation, and shall be for a lamentation.

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Verse 14

Fire is gone out - A vindictive and murderous disposition has taken hold: -

Of a rod of her branches - Ishmael, son of Nethaniah, who was of the blood-royal of Judah: -

Hath devoured her fruit - Hath assassinated Gedaliah, slain many people, and carried off others into the country of the Ammonites. But he was pursued by Jonathan, the son of Kareah, who slew many of his adherents, and delivered much of the people.

She hath no strong rod - None of the blood-royal of Judah left. And from that time not one of her own royal race ever sat upon the throne of Israel.

This is a lamentation - This is a most lamentable business.

And shall be for a lamentation - These predictions shall be so punctually fulfilled, and the catastrophe shall be so complete, that it shall ever remain as a lamentation; as this state of Jerusalem shall never be restored. Even to the present day this, to a Jew, is a subject of mourning.