

Ezekiel, master of metaphors and mystical visions, preached to his fellow exiles in Babylon (early 6th century B.C.E.). Earlier, Egypt had promised to support the kingdom of Judah, but when the Babylonians laid their first siege to Jerusalem, no help came from Egypt. When the Babylonians conquered the city (not yet destroying it), they deported its elite—Ezekiel among them.

The sidrah tells us of the plagues inflicted on Egypt when it refused to release the people of Israel from slavery. Similarly, the haftarah predicts the humiliation of Egypt, because it forsook Jerusalem in its time of trouble.

28:25] Thus says the Eternal God: When I have gathered the House of Israel from the peoples among whom they have been scattered, and have made manifest My holiness there in the sight of the nations, they shall dwell on their own soil, which I gave to My servant Jacob. 26] They shall dwell on it in safety, and build houses, and plant vineyards. When I execute judgments on all the surrounding peoples who have shown them contempt, they shall dwell in safety. And they shall know that I, the Eternal, am their God.

29:1] On the twelfth day of the tenth month of the tenth year, the word of the Eternal came to me, saying: 2] Mortal, set your face against Pharaoh king of Egypt, and prophesy against him and against all Egypt.

3] Speak these words:

Thus says the Eternal God:

Behold, I am against you, Pharaoh king of Egypt, you [are like the] great crocodile, crouching in its River branches,

thinking: "My River is mine, I made it for myself."

28:26] *Plant vineyards.* Expecting long-term security. 29:1] *Tenth year.* After King Jehoiachin's removal and King Zedekiah's installation—one year before the destruction of Jerusalem in 587 B.C.E.

3] *River branches.* The river Nile, when reaching the Mediterranean Sea, spreads out into a delta with many branches. יַאֲר (y'or) denotes a river generally, but when applied to Egypt it means the Nile. In

HAFTARAH for Va-eira

וארא

Ezekiel

28: 25-29: 21

Part 1

כח 25] כֹּה אָמַר אֲדֹנָי יְהוִה אֱלֹהִים בְּקִבְצֵי  
 אֶת־בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל מִן־הָעַמִּים אֲשֶׁר נִפְצְוּ  
 בָם וְנִקְדַּשְׁתִּי בָם לְעֵינֵי הַגּוֹיִם וְיָשְׁבוּ עַל־  
 אַדְמָתָם אֲשֶׁר נָתַתִּי לְעַבְדֵי לִיעֲקֹב:  
 26] וְיָשְׁבוּ עָלֶיהָ לְבֵטַח וּבָנוּ בָתַּיִם וְנִטְעוּ  
 כַרְמִים וְיָשְׁבוּ לְבֵטַח בְּעִשְׂוֹתַי שְׁפֹטִים בְּכָל־  
 הַשְּׂאֵטִים הַשְּׂטִיִּים אַתֶּם מִסְּבִיבוֹתֵם וְיָדְעוּ  
 כִּי אֲנִי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיהֶם:

כט בשנה העשרית בעשרי בשנים עשר  
 לחודש היה דברי יהוה אלי לאמר: 2 בן־  
 אדם שים פניך על הפרעה מלך מצרים  
 והנבא עליו ועל מצרים כלה:

3 דבר ואמרת:  
 כֹּה אָמַר אֲדֹנָי יְהוִה אֱלֹהִים  
 הִנְנִי עָלֶיךָ פֹרְעָה מֶלֶךְ־מִצְרַיִם  
 הַתַּנִּיִּים הַגְּדוֹל הַרְבֵּץ בְּתוֹךְ יַאֲרֵי  
 אֲשֶׁר אָמַר לִי יַאֲרֵי  
 וְאֲנִי עֲשִׂיתִנִּי:

verses 3 to 5, y'or is used five times—once for the River itself and four times for its branches, which are in many places quite shallow.

Crocodile. תַּנִּיִּים (tannim, a variant of the usual tannin); a metaphor for Egypt and its ruler.

My River is mine. Pharaoh prides himself as the River's master, but his powers end when he comes into conflict with God.

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