

# A LIONESS AND TWO WHELPS

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In Ezekiel 19:1-9, God said to Ezekiel the prophet, “Moreover take thou up a lamentation for the princes of Israel, and say, What is thy mother? A lioness: she lay down among lions, she nourished her whelps among young lions. And she brought up one of her whelps: it became a young lion, and it learned to catch the prey; it devoured men. The nations also heard of him; he was taken in their pit, and they brought him with chains unto the land of Egypt. Now when she saw that she had waited, and her hope was lost, then she took another of her whelps, and made him a young lion. And he went up and down among the lions, he became a young lion, and learned to catch the prey, and devoured men. And he knew their desolate palaces, and he laid waste their cities; and the land was desolate, and the fulness thereof, by the noise of his roaring. Then the nations set against him on every side from the provinces, and spread their net over him: he was taken in their pit. And they put him in ward in chains, and brought him to the king of Babylon: they brought him into holds, that his voice should no more be heard upon the mountains of Israel.” The “lioness” is the mother of the princes of Israel, and the two whelps that became young lions are two of the kings of Judah. The first king ruled but was removed from his throne and carried captive to Egypt. The second king was removed from his throne by the king of Babylon. Who are these two kings that serve as the subjects of this lamentation in Ezekiel chapter 19?

## **Jehoahaz king of Judah**

The king that is spoken of in the lamentation in Ezekiel 19:1-4 is Josiah’s son Jehoahaz. Josiah was one of the most righteous kings the Israelites ever had: *“And like unto him was there no king before him, that turned to the Lord with all his heart, and with all his soul, and with all his might, according to all the law of Moses; neither after him arose there any like him”* (2 Kgs 23:25). Sadly, Josiah had three sons and one grandson who reigned as kings in Judah after him, and they were all wicked. The first of these was Jehoahaz. After Josiah’s death, “The people of the land took Jehoahaz the son of Josiah, and anointed him, and made him king in his father’s stead. Jehoahaz was twenty and three years old when he began to reign; and he reigned three months in Jerusalem. And his mother’s name was Hamutal, the daughter of Jeremiah of Libnah. *And he did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord, according to all that his fathers had done. And Pharaoh-nechoh put him in bands at Riblah in the land of Hamath, that he might not reign in Jerusalem; and put the land to a tribute of an hundred talents of silver, and a talent of gold. And Pharaoh-nechoh made Eliakim the son of Josiah king in the room of Josiah his father, and turned his name to Jehoiakim, and took Jehoahaz away: and he came to Egypt, and died there”* (2 Kgs 23:30-34; see also 2 Chr 36:1-4). When Jehoahaz (also called Shallum) was carried to Egypt, the Lord prophesied through Jeremiah that he would not return to Jerusalem again, but would *“die in the place whither they have led him captive, and shall see this land no more”* (Jer 22:11-12). That is precisely what happened. Thus, Jehoahaz was the wicked son of a righteous man, and only reigned as king of Judah for three

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months. He was then taken captive by Pharaoh Nechoh and carried away to Egypt where he died. Meanwhile, the land of Judah was put to tribute by Pharaoh. Ezekiel 19:2-4 serves as a lamentation for this.

## **Jehoiakim king of Judah**

In Ezekiel 19:5-9, the second king in the lamentation was Jehoiakim (also known in scripture as Jehoniah, or Coniah).

He was the second of Josiah's wicked sons to reign as king after him. When Jehoahaz was taken to Egypt, 2 Kings 23:34-37 says, "And Pharaoh-nechoh made Eliakim the son of Josiah king in the room of Josiah his father, and turned his name to Jehoiakim, and took Jehoahaz away: and he came to Egypt, and died there. And Jehoiakim gave the silver and the gold to Pharaoh; but he taxed the land to give the money according to the commandment of Pharaoh: he exacted the silver and the gold of the people of the land, of every one according to his taxation, to give it unto Pharaoh-nechoh. *Jehoiakim was twenty and five years old when he began to reign; and he reigned eleven years in Jerusalem. And his mother's name was Zebudah, the daughter of Pedaiah of Rumah.*

*And he did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord, according to all that his fathers had done."* Jehoiakim, the brother of Jehoahaz, also was unrighteous (2 Kgs 23:36-37; 2 Chr 36:4-5; Jer 22:13-19; Zeph 1:8). The ultimate testimony to his wickedness is found in Jeremiah 36:22-24, when God's word through the prophet Jeremiah was read to him: "Now the king sat in the winterhouse in the ninth month: and there was a fire on the hearth burning before him. And it came to pass, that when Jehudi had read three or four leaves, he cut it with the penknife, and cast it into the fire that was on the hearth, until all the roll was consumed in the fire that was on the hearth. Yet they were not afraid, nor rent their garments, neither the king, nor any of his servants that heard all these words." Jehoiakim ruled for eleven years, and was removed from the throne by Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon (2 Kgs 23:34-24:6; 2 Chr 36:4-8). Jehoiakim was indeed brought to the king of Babylon, but evidently he was never actually carried to the land of Babylon. While he was yet living, the Lord gave this prophecy in Jeremiah 22:18-19: "Therefore thus saith the Lord concerning Jehoiakim the son of Josiah king of Judah; They shall not lament for him, saying, Ah my brother! or, Ah sister! they shall not lament for him, saying, Ah lord! or, Ah his glory! He shall be buried with the burial of an ass, drawn and cast forth beyond the gates of Jerusalem." After he cut up and burned God's word, the Lord also prophesied to Jehoiakim: "Thus saith the Lord; Thou hast burned this roll, saying, Why hast thou written therein, saying, The king of Babylon shall certainly come and destroy this land, and shall cause to cease from thence man and beast? Therefore thus saith the Lord of Jehoiakim king of Judah; *He shall have none to sit upon the throne of David: and his dead body shall be cast out in the day to the heat, and in the night to the frost. And I will punish him and his seed and his servants for their iniquity; and I will bring upon them, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and upon the men of Judah, all the evil that I have pronounced against them; but they hearkened not"* (Jer 36:29-31). Therefore, Ezekiel 19:5-9 serves as a lamentation for wicked king Jehoiakim, who was removed from his throne and whose voice was no longer heard in Israel.