



In a nutshell we see as the outline of this great combination of a riddle and parable, the imagery of 2 eagles, a cedar tree, and a twig – what is this all about?

Here Yehezqël gives forth a parable and explains it, intertwined with rhetoric questions set out in a riddle format, giving the hearers clear answers. In verse 3 we see the first image of a ‘great eagle’ with large wings of long pinions, covered with feathers. This is further explained in verse 12 as being the king of Babelon, which here is referring to king Nebūkadnetšsar. What we must remember here is that in the Hebraic mind-set this picture of this ‘great eagle’ would have set the tone of pointing to something that may be unclean; as the eagle is the first bird that we are told not to eat of, and if fact are to be abominable to us, as written in:

**Wayyiqra/Leviticus 11:13 “And these you do abominate among the birds, they are not eaten, they are an abomination: the eagle, and the vulture, and the black vulture”**

This ‘great eagle’ had long and large wings, and was rich in his many coloured feathers – this speaks of how the reign of Nebūkadnetšsar had power over most of the world – and the various colours of feathers speaks of the many peoples, differing in languages, manners and customs, which were united together under the sceptre (rule) of Nebūkadnetšsar! The word used here for ‘many colours’ is רִקְמָה *riqmah* – Strong’s H7553 which means, ‘**variegated stuff, embroidered, needle work**’, and comes from the root רָקַם *raqam* – Strong’s H7551 which means, ‘**to variegate, embroider, skilfully wrought**’. To **variegate** means ‘**to diversify in external appearance**’! This can speak of putting on a variety of masks and not being true to who you are, but ‘putting on a show or display’ to appease others and pictures for us a type of ‘hypocrisy’! One of the kings of Midyan that was killed with Bil’am, has the name רִקְמָה *Reqem* – Strong’s H7552 meaning, ‘**having many colours**’ and is derived from this word רָקַם *raqam*.

So, Nebūkadnetšsar, the great eagle, comes to Leḅanon and took the top of the cedar, plucking the topmost of its young twigs and brought it to the land of traders and merchants! Once again this reference to Leḅanon is not the physical place of Leḅanon, but is, as we see in verse 12, referring to Yerushalayim – why then Leḅanon?

The cedar of Leḅanon in Scripture is often used in reference to Yisra’ël and Yerushalayim, where the royal palace was built, and was so rich in the cedar wood that Shelomoh acquired from Leḅanon. The ‘cedar tree’ being referred to here is the ‘House of Yisra’ël’ or more specifically it gives reference to the royal house/line of Dawid - in other words it refers to the family tree of King Dawid! Understanding this gives us better insight as to who it was that Nebūkadnetšsar came and plucked off. The topmost of its young twigs represents the youngest or current leader in the royal line – and this is clearly referring to Yehoyaḳin, the son of Yehoyaḳim. Yehoyaḳim was set up as king by the sovereign of Mitsrayim who had changed his name from Elyaqim to Yehoyaḳim, after setting aside Yehoyaḳim’s brother, Yeho’aḥaz, from being king over Yehudaḥ and took him to Mitsrayim:

**Dibre haYamim Bet/2 Chronicles 36:2-6 “Yeho’aḥaz was twenty-three years old when he began to reign, and he reigned three months in Yerushalayim. 3 And the sovereign of Mitsrayim turned him aside in Yerushalayim, and imposed on the land a levy of one hundred talents of silver and a talent of gold. 4 And the sovereign of Mitsrayim made his brother Elyaqim sovereign over Yehudaḥah and Yerushalayim, and changed his name to Yehoyaḳim. And Neḳo took Yeho’aḥaz his brother and brought him to Mitsrayim. 5 Yehoyaḳim was twenty-five years old when he began to reign, and he reigned eleven years in Yerushalayim. And he did evil in the eyes of יהוה his Elohim. 6 Nebūkadnetšsar sovereign of Baḅel came up against him, and bound him in bronze shackles to take him away to Baḅel.”**

Now while Yehoyaḳim was taken to Babel, we see that the young tender twig being referred to here is his young wicked son, who began to reign:

**Dibre haYamim Bet/2 Chronicles 36:9-10 “Yehoyaḳin was eight years old when he began to reign, and he reigned in Yerushalayim three months and ten days. And he did evil in the eyes of יהוה. 10 And at the turn of the year Sovereign Nebūkadnetšsar sent and brought him to Baḅel, with the valuable utensils from the House of יהוה, and made Tsidqiyahu, Yehoyaḳim’s brother, sovereign over Yehudaḥ and Yerushalayim.”**

Melaḳim Bet/2 Kings 24 also records these events and there we see that Yehoyaḳin is translated as being 18 years old, as the root word used in both accounts can render 8 or eighteen – the fact of the matter is that he was a young king who only ruled for 3 months and 10 days before being taken by force into Baḅelon, along with all the royalty, rich, craftsmen and strong of the land, leaving only the poor in it:

**Melaḳim Bet/2 Kings 24:14 “And he exiled all Yerushalayim, and all the officers and all the mighty brave men – ten thousand exiles – and all the craftsmen and smiths. None remained except the poorest people of the land.”**

Here in Yehezqël we see that after the king of Baḅelon did this, he took some of the seed (the poor of the land) and planted it in a field (left them in Yerushalayim), and he set Tsidqiyahu, Yehoyaḳin’s uncle, as king of Yehudaḥ in Yerushalayim. This was the ‘replanted tree’ that Nebūkadnetšsar planted and made a covenant with one of the royal seed, as described in **verse 13**. Tsidqiyahu rebelled against Nebūkadnetšsar, and aligned himself with Pharaoh of Mitsrayim – and so we see here two groups of people – one who had been taken into captivity in Baḅelon and one who were left behind and a wicked

king was set up over them, and rebelled. יהוה tells Yirmeyahu in a vision that these two groups were like two baskets of figs – one ripe and one rotten:

**Yirmeyahu/Jeremiah24:1** “יהוה showed me, and look, there were two baskets of figs set before the Hēkal of יהוה, after Neḅuqaḏnetstsar sovereign of Babel had exiled Yeḱonyahu son of Yehoyaḳim, sovereign of Yehuḏah, and the heads of Yehuḏah with the craftsmen and smiths, from Yerushalayim, and had brought them to Babel.”

**Yirmeyahu/Jeremiah24:5** “Thus said יהוה, the Elohim of Yisra’ēl, ‘Like these good figs, so do I acknowledge the exiles of Yehuḏah, whom I have sent out of this place for their own good, into the land of the Chaldeans.’”

**Yirmeyahu/Jeremiah24:8** “And as the spoilt figs that could not be eaten because they are so spoilt,’ for thus said יהוה, ‘so do I give up Tsīdqiyahu, the sovereign of Yehuḏah, his heads, the rest of Yerushalayim who remain in this land, and those who dwell in the land of Mitsrayim.’”

Ok by now you are hopefully getting the picture – Tsīdqiyahu breaks the oath made with Neḅuqaḏnetstsar, who had set him up to reign, and turns to Mitsrayim in the hope to align himself with Pharaoh in an attempt to overthrow Neḅuqaḏnetstsar; and in the process becomes a ‘rotten basket of figs’!

Yirmeyahu had warned both those who were exiled to Babelon as well as those who were left in Yerushalayim, to not listen to the falsehood of Tsīdqiyahu and the false prophets; to those in Babel he told to remain for the 70 years according to the word of Elohim; and those under the leadership of Tsīdqiyahu he warned not to go to Mitsrayim and the refused the listen, declaring their allegiance to sun-worship of the sovereignty of the heavens!

The exile into Babelon was as a result of their disobedience and was a measure of disciplining from יהוה, which He forewarned them about in **Deḅarim/Deuteronomy 28** (go and read!)

As a result of Tsīdqiyahu’s allegiance to Mitsrayim, Yerushalayim was besieged and destroyed

**Dīḅre haYamim Bet/2 Chronicles 36:12-13** “And he did evil in the eyes of יהוה his Elohim. He did not humble himself before Yirmeyahu the prophet, who spoke from the mouth of יהוה. 13 And he also rebelled against Sovereign Neḅuqaḏnetstsar, who had made him swear by Elohim, but he stiffened his neck and hardened his heart against turning to יהוה Elohim of Yisra’ēl.”

The city was besieged in the 9<sup>th</sup> year of Tsīdqiyahu’s reign and was besieged until the 11<sup>th</sup> year of his reign, when the scarcity of food became so great that there was a breach in the wall and the city was captured and destroyed and Tsīdqiyahu’s sons were slaughtered before his eyes, and then his eyes were put out, and was bound and taken to Babel! Tsīdqiyahu did not do what Torah instructs us to do as parents in Deḅarim/Deuteronomy 6, where he should have impressed upon his sons the Torah when they stand up, sit down, walk along the way etc.; and as a result of this his sons did not walk in the Torah and faced the consequences of this, being slaughtered right before their father’s eyes as a witness against him; and then in having his own eyes taken out, we see the clear truth of how he would never be able to ‘see’ the Truth of deliverance of יהוה, being bound and taken to Babelon!

Here in **Yeḥezqēl 17:22-24** we see a great promise amidst a very wicked and rebellious period – and that was how, despite the wickedness of the kings that had led a rebellion against the Covenants of יהוה, and how there may have not been much left of the ‘cedar tree’, יהוה says that He Himself would take of the top of the highest cedar – that in reference to the Head – and would pluck off a ‘tender one’ and plant it on a high mountain in Yisra’ēl; and it would become a big cedar. The word cedar in Hebrew is עֵצַיִם **erez** – **Strong’s H730** which comes from the primitive root that means, ‘**firm, strong**’. And this ‘firm and strong’ Cedar would give enough shade and dwelling for birds of every sort and every tree of the field shall know that יהוה has brought down the high tree and exalted the low tree!

This is a clear reference to Messiah and the establishment of His reign - where every nation will know that He is יהוה! And while he used Neḅuqaḏnetstsar as a means of discipline, he would bring his reign low and firmly establish the true reign of Elohim here on earth. The other powerful picture we see from this is how יהוה takes from the same ‘cedar tree’ - a young tender twig – and plants it in the heights of Yisra’ēl. This clearly reveals how His Covenant, despite being broken by rebellious man, is renewed in Messiah. There is no ‘replacement’ of Yisra’ēl – the Covenants of Promise are still in place through the Blood of Messiah, who as a tender twig was plucked and planted in order to bring back life to a decaying tree, that had been affected by sin and lawlessness:

**Yeshayahu/Isaiah 53:1-5** “Who has believed our report? And to whom was the arm of יהוה revealed? 2 For He grew up before Him as a tender plant, and as a root out of dry ground. He has no form or splendour that we should look upon Him, nor appearance that we should desire Him – 3 despised and rejected by men, a man of pains and knowing sickness. And as one from whom the face is hidden, being despised, and we did not consider Him. 4 Truly, He has borne our

**sicknesses and carried our pains. Yet we reckoned Him stricken, smitten by Elohim, and afflicted. 5 But He was pierced for our transgressions, He was crushed for our crookednesses. The chastisement for our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed.”**

In **Tehillim/Psalm 92** Dawid tells us that the righteous will grow like the cedars of Lebanon. It is a strong and firm tree and a cedar tree is in itself a wonderful illustration of bringing us a picture of a person who is טוב **toḇ** (good) and fully functional in Messiah. They have been known to grow up to 12 meters in circumference! The roots grow down extremely deep and wrap around rocks for anchorage, and grow upwards in heights of up to 45 meters!!! The fragrance of a cedar tree acts as a great defence against being attacked by insects and pests and it is **‘knot’ free and rot resistant**, known for their longevity and are **perennial evergreen trees**. Cedar as we know is used in Scripture for the process of the cleaning of a leper – it is used is the Red Heifer sacrifice; Shelomoh used cedar wood to build the Temple. The cedar speaks of us being strong and trustworthy in Messiah and being the fragrance of Messiah, which to some will be death and to others life. It also speaks of trusting in יהוה and obeying the command of יהושע Messiah to not worry! The cedar also represents for us **‘storing up treasure in heaven where moth and rust do not destroy’** and so as we do the good works prepared in advance for us we repel the need to store up the fleshly desires that are like pests that cause rot!

I firmly believe that the upright pole/stake that Messiah was nailed to, would have been of cedar wood, as this would have perfectly fulfilled the requirements of the red heifer sacrifice as well as the cleansing of the leper, where Messiah satisfied the punishment for our sins through His Blood. And when that wooden (cedar) pole was ‘planted in the ground and His blood shed and being poured out on the ground, I believe that, in a manner of speaking, the ‘dry tree’ was revived and received renewed life by the Blood of Messiah; and all who look upon Him and call on His Name, being grafted into the royal cedar tree and vine, shall be delivered and equipped to bear the fruit of righteousness by walking in the clear command (Torah) of Elohim.

What we can glean from this chapter is very clear – endure discipline by being ‘rooted’ in love – that is to be rooted in Messiah by being diligent in hearing, guarding and doing all He commands. Many times we see how people today are unable to endure discipline:

**Iyob/Job 5:17 “Look, blessed is the man whom Eloah does reprove, so do not despise the discipline of the Almighty”**

**Mishlĕ/Proverbs 1:7 “The fear of יהוה is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and discipline.”**

**Ib’rim/Hebrews 12:7-8 “If you endure discipline, Elohim is treating you as sons. For what son is there whom a father does not discipline? 8 But if you are without discipline, of which all have become sharers, then you are illegitimate and not sons.”**

To the lukewarm assembly יהושע says in:

**Hazon/revelation 3:19 “As many as I love, I reprove and discipline. So be ardent and repent.”**

In this great riddle and parable we see the clear reason for the discipline of יהוה – rebellion and lawlessness! And while under the discipline of the Father, many rebelled even more unable to endure and were destroyed. יהוה gives us the assurance of His great love as a Father who disciplines us for a while, after which we will see how it will yield the peaceable fruit if righteousness by those who are trained by it!

SO while we are in the world we must remember that we are not of the world and should therefore not put our trust in man or in the world and its systems, but put trust in יהוה alone.

**Yirmeyahu/Jeremiah 17:5 “Thus said יהוה, “Cursed is the man who trusts in man and makes flesh his arm, and whose heart turns away from יהוה.”**

We are, in a manner of speaking, still in an exiled state due to rebellion and sin, yet if we endure this time of sojourning with fervent faith, we keep our eyes fixed on the sure and promised hope of our King’s return, and his taking us back to where we belong! This is not a time to be rebelling against יהוה in any way, but rather being steadfast in being rooted and grounded in the love of Messiah, having been grafted in to the True root and head of the vine and cedar tree – that is יהושע Messiah – the root and head of Yisra’ĕl – the body of Messiah!

**Yeshayahu/Isaiah 31:1 “Woe to those who go down to Mitsrayim for help, and rely on horses, who trust in chariots because they are many, and in horsemen because they are very strong, but who do not look to the Set-apart One of Yisra’ĕl, nor seek יהוה!”**

Woe to you and cursed are you if you trust in the flesh – the ‘arm’ we are to look to is the ‘ARM of יהוה’ – which is יהושע Messiah!!!

While there is still much to speak about regarding the two eagles and the twig, I simply want us to recognise the effect of rebellion; and the call to righteousness in Messiah, and let us recognise that we must trust in, rely upon and call on the Name of יהוה, and not look to the ‘eagles’ of the world!

**Tehillim/Psalm 121:1-2 “I lift up my eyes to the hills; Where does my help come from? 2 My help comes from יהוה, Maker of the heavens and earth.”**

The clear message of this riddle and parable is that all throughout the disciplining of יהוה to a rebellious House, there is always the extending of a branch of hope in Messiah (The Arm of יהוה), who has worked a deliverance for us – the choice is whether we take hold of Him and walk in His ways, being rooted in the Tree of Life and receive the promise of His sure Word and flourish under the nourishment He extends to His own; or turn to the world and face the reality of a destruction that is promised to those who forsake Him – for יהוה has spoken and shall do it!

In closing let us read two powerful chapters that are clear in the call to righteousness and trust in the “twig” that was planted and become a great tree! **(Hoshĕa/Hosea 14 & Tehillim/Psalm 1 - Read)**

יהוה bless you and guard you; יהוה make His face shine upon you and show favour to you; יהוה lift up His face to you and give you shalom!