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A Lament over a Loss: A Close Reading of Ezekiel 19

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ABSTRACT

Ezekiel 19 is a distinctive lament poem within the Book of Ezekiel, standing apart from the surrounding judgment oracles in chapters 1–24 through its genre, tone, and imagery. This paper offers a close reading of Ezekiel 19, examining its literary structure, metaphorical language, and theological function within the broader prophetic corpus. Identified as a qinah lament, the poem adapts traditional funeral dirge conventions while notably omitting explicit accusations of sin, confessions, or direct appeals to God. Instead, it mourns the irreversible downfall of Judah through two parables—the lioness and her cubs, and the uprooted vine—both of which employ the characteristic "Once–Now" pattern to contrast former glory with present devastation. The study argues that the mother figure, representing Judah collectively, is central to both parables, emphasizing communal rather than individual responsibility for the loss. Furthermore, the paper situates Ezekiel 19 within Ezekiel's judgment oracles (1–24), highlighting the motif of divine abandonment and its resonance with ancient Near Eastern lament traditions. By foregrounding grief rather than justification, Ezekiel 19 functions as a theological lament that underscores the completeness of Judah's fall and deliberately undermines false hopes of restoration. The chapter thus demonstrates the significant role of lament as a prophetic medium for articulating judgment, loss, and collective accountability in the Hebrew Bible.

Keywords: *Ezekiel 19, Qinah Lament, Judah, Divine Abandonment, Prophetic Judgment, Metaphor*

INTRODUCTION

Ezekiel 19 is a lament poem. It stands out within the Book of Ezekiel. It is relatively short, distinct in genre compared to its larger literary corpus (chapters 1-24). It is a *qinah* lament. A *qinah* lament is a dirge often sung at funerals, typically featuring a "Once-Now" structure.[1] A *qinah* lament praises the deceased's past glory, laments their present loss, and calls others to mourn over the loss. Ezekiel 19, however, deviates from the traditional lament structure. It lacks some standard features of lament poems, such as expressions of "Alas," a protest to God, or a confession of sin. Instead, the prophetic poem can be seen as an adaptation of a well-known lament genre in Israel, as Ronald M. Hals suggests.[2] Alternatively, Daniel I. Block interprets it as a "parody," a song in a different style.[3] Nevertheless, *qinah* laments can vary in style. For instance, Lamentations 3 begins with "I am the man who has seen the affliction of his wrath," unlike other qinah laments in the book that start with "Alas!".

Unlike *qinah* dirges that focus on the deceased (such as 2 Samuel 1:17 and 2 Chronicles 35:25), Ezekiel 19 addresses the living, including rulers and nations. Additionally, while *qinah* dirges typically focus on a single deceased person, Ezekiel 19 addresses a larger community of Judah. Notably, there is no mention of the divine name, יהוה (Adonay), or the shared address, בן־אדם (ben Adam), "O son of man," throughout Ezekiel 19. The entire poem is bleak and negative, expressing deep sorrow over the judgment on Judah.[4] This raises questions about how this *qinah* text aligns with the message conveyed in the prophetic addresses to Judah in Ezekiel 1-24. A worthwhile study could be to explore how Ezekiel 19 relates to the prophetic oracles of God's judgment against Judah.

This paper is a close reading of the text of Ezekiel 19. The first part of the paper will study the literary structure of the text and explain the content of the poem under study. The second part will be a brief study on the relationship between Ezekiel 19 and Ezekiel 1-24. And the final part will emphasize the significance of lament genre to to the prophetic corpus in the Hebrew Bible.

1. Ezekiel 19: The Text, Literary Structure, and Comments

The Text

[1] And you, take up a lamentation concerning the princes of Israel

[2] And you say:

"What was your mother? A lioness! Among lions

[1] H. Jahnow, *Das hebrische Leichenlied im Rahmen der Volkerdichtung* (BZAW 36, Giessen: Alfred Topelmann, 1923): 92-108. Cited in Panc C. Beentjes, "What a Lioness was Your Mother: Reflections on Ezekiel 19," in: Bob Becking and Meindert Dijkstra (Eds), *On Reading Prophetic Texts: Gender Specific and Related Studies in Memory of Fokkelien van Dijk-Hemmes* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1996), 22.

[2] Ronald M. Hals, *Ezekiel*, FOTL, Vol. 19 (Grand Rapids: Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1989), 128-129.

[3] Daniel I. Block, *Ezekiel 1-24*, NICOT (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1997), 594.

[4] Panc C. Beentjes, "What a Lioness was Your Mother: Reflections on Ezekiel 19," in: Bob Becking and Meindert Dijkstra (Eds), *On Reading Prophetic Texts: Gender Specific and Related Studies in Memory of Fokkelien van Dijk-Hemmes* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1996), 21-23.

she crouched, in the midst of young lions she reared her cubs

[3] And she raised one of her cubs, young lion he became

and he learnt to catch prey, men he ate

[4] But nations heard about him, in their snare he was seized

and they brought him with the hooks to the land of Egypt

[5] When she saw that she waited long, her hope about to perish

And she took another of her cub, she set him to be young lion

[6] And he walked among lions, young lion he became

And he learnt to catch prey, men he ate

[7] And he ravaged his widows, and their cities he made desolate

And the earth and its fullness were appalled at the voice of his roaring

[8] But nations around provinces set against him

And they spread against him their net, in their pit he was seized

[9] And they put him in the cage with the hooks, and they brought him

to the king of Babel, they brought him in the strongholds

So that his voice will not be heard any more towards the mountains of Israel

[10] Your mother was like a vine with blood of grapes, upon water she is planted

Fruitful and full of leaves she was due to much waters

[11] And mighty stems belonged to her, to be ruling scepters

And its height was so high over among branches

And it appeared in its height among many its boughs

[12] But she was uprooted, [v] in rage, to the ground she was thrown down

And eastern wind made her fruit withered, they (fruits) were torn off

and they (fruits) dried up, mighty stem fire consumed it

[13] And now she is planted in the wilderness, in the land of dry and thirsty

[14] And fire went forth from the stem of her shoots, its fruit it consumed

And there was nothing in her a mighty stem, a scepter to rule

Lamentation it is and it has become a lamentation

LITERARY STRUCTURE

Structurally, Ezekiel 19 is well-organized. It begins and ends with a lamentation (vv 1, 14b). The poem is divided into two parables: one about a lioness and the other about a vine. These parables share a similar expression. The noun, "your mother," links both the parables (vv 2 and 10). Within the parables, the "Once-Now" pattern is evident. For Beentjes, the first parable, the parable of a lioness in verses 2-9 focuses more on the cubs, while the second parable centers on the mother herself.[5] However, this division seems less likely. The first parable emphasizes the mother lion and her lost hope twice. The cubs serve as illustrations for the mother's efforts and her severe downfall. Brownlee rightly views the unit as complementary because both the lion and the vine are established metaphors for Judah.[6]

The literary structure of Ezekiel 19 is given below:

A Command to Take Up a Lamentation (v 1)

A Parable of a Lioness (vv 2-9)

"Once" - Greatness and Power (vv 2-3, 5-7)

"Now" - Seizure and Downfall (vv 4, 8-9)

A Parable of a Vine (vv 10-14)

"Once," Splendor and Mighty (vv 10-11)

"Now," Uprooted and Consumed (vv 12-14a)

An Affirmation of Lamentations (v 14b)

COMMENTS

A Command to Take Up a Lamentation (v 1)

God's urgent command to the prophet Ezekiel to lament over Israel and Judah is a task that the prophet must undertake. This command contrasts sharply with the popular belief about God's promises to Israel and Judah. The urgency of God's command to Ezekiel to lament over the rulers of Israel is evident in the order of the pronoun, "you" and the imperative, "take up." Whenever the pronoun "you" precedes an imperative, it signifies a severe command from God to the people to obey him (Genesis 6:21; Exodus 30:23; Deuteronomy 5:31). The shift in tone and purpose highlights the gravity of the situation and the need for repentance and change. The command to lament over Israel suggests that the people deserved a funeral with a dirge. Thus, Ezekiel 19 is not an odd text that fits nowhere in the book. Rather, it is part of the prophetic command to prophesy God's judgment against the people's sin against him.

A Parable of Lioness (vv 2–9)

The parable of a lioness stands out as a unique instance where the lion imagery is

[5] Beentjes, "What a Lioness was Your Mother: Reflections on Ezekiel 19," 31.
[6] Brownlee, *Ezekiel 1-19*, 296.

exclusively employed to represent Israelite rulers. While the lion metaphor was commonly attributed to victorious kings in West Asia, it holds a distinct significance in Ezekiel 19, symbolizing the rise and fall of Israelite kings.[7] While studies on Ezekiel 19 often focus on the two lions described in verses 3-10, Corrine Carvalho rightly emphasizes the importance of placing the mother (the lioness and the vine) at the center of the text. Excessive emphasis on the identity of the lions diverts attention from the central theme.[8] The mother lion serves as the focal point of the narrative, and the rise and fall of the two lions in the first parable contribute to the mother lion's sense of despair. Some Bible translations and commentaries interpret the opening clause of verse 2 as an exclamation: "What a lioness was your mother among lions!". However, the Hebrew syntax suggests that it can be taken as an interrogative, "What was your mother?". Thus, verse 2 could be translated as "What was your mother? A lioness! Among lions, she crouched, in the midst of young lions, she reared her cubs." The Masoretic Text (MT) employs vivid language, using different words for lions compared to the Septuagint (LXX). Beentjes, in his comparison of the lioness metaphor used in Genesis 49:9, Numbers 23:24, 24:9, and Deuteronomy 33:20 with Ezekiel 19, observes a stark contrast between the positive portrayal of lion metaphors in Genesis 49:8-12 and the negative depiction in Ezekiel 19. In Genesis 49:8-12, the focus is on the blessing of Judah, with the victims of other nations falling into Judah's hands. However, in Ezekiel 19, the roles are reversed, and Israel becomes a prey to the nations' trap. Thus, the poet of Ezekiel 19 creatively utilizes the Judah-lion metaphor to convey his qinah dirge against Israel.[9]

Who is the mother lion? The poetic description says, "Among lions, she crouched, and in the midst of young lions, she reared her cubs" (v 2). A more literal interpretation suggests that the mother lion is Hamutal, the wife of King Josiah and the mother of Jehoahaz and Zedekiah (2 Ki 23:31; 24:18; Jer 52:1), while the two lions are Jehoahazah and Zedekiah. However, there is no consistency in this interpretation.[10] Other *qinah* poems in Ezekiel focus on foreign nations like Tyre and Egypt (27:2; 32:2). Therefore, the mother addressed in Ezekiel 19 is likely Israel or Judah. The mother lion's crouching among lions can be interpreted as a reference to Israel or Judah's neighboring nations, including both its political allies and enemies.

"Once" - Greatness and Power (vv 2-3, 5-7)

The illustration of two cubs growing stronger and making nations tremble showcases the "one-time" greatness and power of Judah-lion. The first lion transforms into a healthy and young lion, hunting not only wild animals but also devouring human flesh. Verse 3 employs a balanced 3+2 cola structure, with Verse 3b and 6a being identical. However, the second lion's actions surpass those of the first. He roams among lions, becoming even stronger, and learns to catch prey and devour humans. The political power of the lions is depicted through both sexual and political imagery. The violation of women, the desolation of fortified cities, and the fear instilled in nations all point to the context of war. The description of the two lions and their

[7] Nancy R. Bowen, *Ezekiel*, AOTC (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2010), 110.

[8] Corrine Carvalho, "Putting the Mother Back in the Center: Metaphor and Multivalence in Ezekiel 19," in: John J. Ahn and Stephen L. Cook, *Thus Says the Lord: Essays on the Former and Latter Prophets in Honor of Robert R. Wilson*, JSOT Supplement Series 502 (New York: T & T Clark International, 2009), 121.

[9] Beentjes, "What a Lioness was Your Mother," 26-28.

[10] Greenberg, *Ezekiel 1-20*, 356.

activities ultimately convey the greatness and power of Israel/Judah. Unlike any other *qinah* poem, Ezekiel 19 lacks accusations of sin, confessions of sin, or even defenses for God's justice. Instead, it is a lament, emphasizing the importance of remembering the past and mourning the present reality.

"Now" - Seizure and Downfall (vv 4, 8-9)

The fearsome roar of the lions echoed across the nations, but they harbored a hope for the downfall of Israel's rulers. The nations devised a plan to trap and seize the rulers of Judah, effectively ending Judah's strategic efforts. The once-mighty lions were captured, chained, and confined in a cage to prevent their power from being diminished and their voice from being heard again. The nations transported their captives to Egypt and Babylon, where they were placed in their respective places. The mention of Egypt and Babylon serves as a symbol of all the afflictions that Israel and Judah endured under foreign rule. In verses 4, 8-9, the nations appear to act benevolently towards humanity. They responded to the lions' threat by devising a plan to capture them, imprison them in cages, and exile them to remote locations. This imagery might suggest the nations were determined to protect humanity from the danger posed by the lions. However, this imagery possibly refers to the sudden downfall of the lions, symbolizing the loss of hope for Israel and Judah. The downfall was abrupt, and the end was imminent. Lamentations 1:6 vividly captures this scenario: "All her splendor departs from Daughter Zion; her princes become like hares that lack pasture, and they wander without strength before the pursuer" (Lam 1:6).

The typical features of *qinah* laments include accusations of people's sins, confessions of sin, and defenses of God's justice as well. The absence of these in Ezekiel 19 shows that the prophetic lament is more of a mourning over the loss rather than a protest.

A Parable of a Vine (vv 10-14)

The parable of the vine also has a parallel with Genesis 49:11, where Judah is identified as the owner of the vine. However, in this context, Judah represents the people of God collectively, so the image of owning vines can be seen as Judah being a vine. Unlike in Genesis 49, where Judah's vine is a blessing, in Ezekiel 19:10-14, the Judah-vine image conveys Judah's severe downfall.

"Once" - Splendor and Might (vv 10-11)

In the first parable, the greatness of the lioness was described in her stature among lions. In the second parable, the parable of vine, it is fitting that the greatness of the vine is attributed to Judah's fruitfulness and prosperity. The mother Judah is likened to a vine bearing red grapes. Just as the mother lion crouches among lions, the mother vine is planted amidst abundant water. The splendor of the Judah-vine is described as fruitful, fresh, and having sturdy stems. This plant imagery may symbolize a perfect life. Psalm 1 portrays a godly person as a well-watered plant that bears fruit in its season, contrasting with a wicked person likened to chaff. Similarly, the mother lion nurtures young lions, and the vine, with its strong stems, is meant for ruling scepters. It grows tall and strong, reaching the height of its thick branches and boughs.

"Now" - Uprooted and Consumed (vv 12-14a)

The once beautiful and mighty vine is suddenly uprooted. The passive form of the verb,

"uproooted," suggests a sudden, severe, and definitive punishment. This verb is used in a few instances in the context of God's promises (Jeremiah 31:40, 42:10; Amos 9:15). The use of this verb in this lamentation for Israel likely points to the severity of God's judgment against his people. The once fat, fresh, and strong vine is uprooted in anger. Although there is no mention of God in this pericope, it is always God who uproots nations in anger and fury (Deuteronomy 29:27). Interestingly, the fall of the vine implies Judah's abandonment of the Lord, but there is no accusation of sin (Lamentations 1:3). There is no confession of sin (Lamentations 1:8). There is not even a defense for God's justice (Lamentations 1:18).

The tall vine, grounded firmly to the earth, is subjected to the relentless force of the east wind. This wind wreaks havoc upon the vine, withering its fruit, tearing it off, and drying it completely. Elsewhere, the eastern wind serves as God's instrument of destruction. It unleashed locusts upon the Egyptians, causing immense damage that rendered the land barren and unable to regenerate (Exodus 10:13). Similarly, it inflicted severe damage upon the land of Ezekiel, leaving it desolate and lifeless (Ezekiel 17:10). In the lament against Tyre, the east wind wreaks havoc in the heart of the sea, causing immense suffering (Ezekiel 27:26). Moreover, it caused discomfort to Jonah, who was carried away by the wind (Jonah 4:8). Consequently, the fall of the mother vine is complete. The vine's strong stem, which once stood tall, has been consumed by fire, leaving it devoid of strength. This strong stem may symbolize the fortified city of Jerusalem, which the Babylonians destroyed by fire (2 Kings 25:9; 2 Chronicles 36:19; Jeremiah 52). However, the fire that consumed the vine's stem is akin to self-destruction, yet it is caused from an external source. Greenberg draws a parallel to Judges 9:20, where Jotham's fable describes a fire that erupts in a bough and destroys the fruit of the vine. Perhaps the author of Ezekiel 19 subtly suggests that the fall of Judah was a consequence of her unfaithfulness to God. While this accusation may not be direct, it is conveyed through the profound sense of loss and the severe damage inflicted upon the land. Taken together, both the parables convey that the reason for Israel/Judah's fall is a combination of external and internal factors. It is a result of Judah's unfaithfulness to God and, perhaps, her exclusive pride in her superiority over other nations. Verse 13 holds particular significance in the poem as it vividly portrays the dire situation of the mother vine: "But now she is planted in the wilderness, in a dry and thirsty land." Earlier, she was surrounded by abundant water, but now she finds herself in a barren land. The text fails to provide a clear explanation for this drastic decline. Greenberg suggests that Judah's pride, as evident in verse 11 ("her height was so high"), is the root cause of this downfall. Additionally, other passages describe women of Judah as haughty (Isaiah 3:16; Ezekiel 16:50). However, the text does not explicitly mention Judah's sins. Instead, it focuses on the profound loss that should be mourned.

An Affirmation of Lamentation (v 14b)

The poem begins with a command to take up a lament concerning the political rulers of Israel. This urgent call is driven by the impending judgment. Israel/Judah has lost its glory and faces significant losses. The fall is complete, and the damage is severe. Alas! The reason for Judah's downfall is Judah herself, her estrangement from God. This unfortunate situation demands a lament that will resonate for a long time. There is no quick remedy. The past glory of Israel is not meant to suppress the present reality but to commemorate it. Let the lament be!

2. The Function of Ezekiel 19 within Ezekiel 1-24

The book of Ezekiel comprises three main sections: oracles of judgment against Israel (chapters 1-24), oracles of judgment against foreign nations (chapters 25-32), and oracles of salvation for Israel (chapters 33-48). The judgment oracles focus on the fall of Judah because of her estrangement from God. The oracles against foreign powers serve as a prelude to the establishment of God's new kingdom. The oracles of salvation offer hope that God will restore Israel.[11] The book of Ezekiel stands out from other prophetic books, particularly in its use of language. It employs excellent metaphorical language, blending poetic and prosaic elements. The genre of the book incorporates apocalyptic elements, characterized by dramatic signs and symbolic actions. Non-prophetic genres, such as wisdom proverbs and laments, also abound within the book of Ezekiel.[12]

Ezekiel 19 seamlessly fits into Ezekiel's judgment oracles against Judah and Jerusalem, as outlined in chapters 1-24. The lament genre is not novel to the book of Ezekiel. In fact, out of the eighteen instances of the word *qinah* in Hebrew Bible, ten of them appear in Ezekiel. This frequency and emphasis on lamentation contribute to the central theme of the first part of the book, which revolves around the demise of the kings and kingdoms of Israel.[13] Donna Lee Petter posits that the entire book of Ezekiel is patterned after a Mesopotamian City Lament (MCL) genre, drawing inspiration from Sumerian Nippur laments. She contends that MCL significantly influenced the very composition of Ezekiel. Petter identifies at least nine distinct features of MCL within Ezekiel. For instance, the incident in 2:8-3:3 establishes the subject and mood of lament. In this passage, the prophet consumes a lamentation scroll. The prophet's native place, possibly Nippur, suggests a lament-oriented background for his writing. The motifs of divine abandonment and divine responsibility are prevalent throughout the text. Just as lament literature often depicts gods' return, the book of Ezekiel envisions the return of the glory or the presence of God.[14] Interestingly, Ezekiel employs lamentation not only to address Judah's fall but also to address the nation's fall (chapters 19, 26, 28, and 32). Therefore, Ezekiel 19 is not an isolated text within the book of Ezekiel; it serves a specific purpose.

Ezekiel 19 laments God's abandonment of his people. Although there's no direct mention of Yahweh, the poem illustrates the reversal of God's promise to Judah in Genesis 49:8-12. Both the lioness and vine parables depict how the images of the Judah-lion and Judah-owned-vine were subjected to foreign powers and uprooted in anger (of God), respectively. This divine abandonment is a central theme in the lament genre. Daniel I. Block interprets the motif of divine abandonment in Ezekiel as a parallel to the notion of deities rejecting people in Ancient Near East (ANE) literature and as a polemic against them. Block suggests that the ANE accounts, such as Sumerian lament literature, the Akkadian prophetic letter from Mari, the Assyrian Tukulti-Ninurta epic and Esarhaddon's account of Marduk's departure, the Babylonian Marduk prophecy and the poem of Erra and Ishum, and the Persian Cyrus Cylinder's account of Marduk's abandonment, served as the background for Ezekiel's depiction of Yahweh's abandonment of Jerusalem's temple. These accounts portray the gods'

[11] Lawrence Boadt, *Ezekiel*, AB, Vol. 2 (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 711.
[12] Boadt, *Ezekiel*, 716-718.
[13] Bowen, *Ezekiel*, 108.
[14] Donna Lee Petter, "The Book of Ezekiel: Patterned after a Mesopotamian City Lament?" PhD diss., University of Toroto, 2009.

emotional responses, including wrath, defense, intercession, and war. Block argues that the prophet used these accounts to connect with his audience, who were influenced by pagan religious beliefs, and to effectively criticize pagan gods, thereby emphasizing Yahweh's sovereignty. Block presents a compelling argument that Ezekiel, who spent most of his life in Babylon, was aware of literary connections and utilized them to convey his prophetic message. Block effectively highlights the differences between Ezekiel's motif of divine abandonment as depicted in Ezekiel 8-11 and ancient Near Eastern (ANE) literature. Firstly, Ezekiel repeatedly emphasizes human sin as the primary cause of Yahweh's abandonment of his people and the temple. This sin encompasses both religious and moral transgressions, including idolatry and violence (8:3-17; 9:9). Secondly, Yahweh's departure from the temple is not a result of forced will but rather a voluntary act by Yahweh himself. This contrasts with ANE parallel accounts that portray gods abandoning their sacred places due to enemy invasions. Thirdly, the consequences of Yahweh's departure are severe. The holy place, the Jerusalem temple, falls under the control of foreigners. Fourthly, the exile serves as both a punishment and a form of spiritual care. Yahweh does not abandon his people entirely but assures his presence wherever they are driven. Fifthly, unlike gods who change their hearts and return, Yahweh will transform the people's hearts and redeem them. However, as previously mentioned, Ezekiel 19 does not directly accuse human sin against God. Nevertheless, the severe downfall of Judah implies God's wrath against Judah's transgressions. Throughout the poem, there is no positive outlook; lament remains. Such a dark portrayal aligns well with God's judgment against the deserving Judah. By doing so, Ezekiel "deliberately undermines the false hopes and aspirations of his fellow exiles."[15]

Ezekiel 19 laments the complete downfall of Judah. Its description doesn't focus on specific individuals in Judah but rather on how Judah lost its glory and was reduced to exile. By implication, Israel/Judah experiences the severe loss of their kingdom, and the collective whole is responsible for her demise. Paul Joyce studies Ezekiel chapters 9, 14, and 18 in detail and sees them as typical of the entire body of chapters 1-24, which emphasizes Israel's responsibility for the exile. He argues that Israel's responsibility for the exile is a collective responsibility rather than individualistic. For instance, in Ezekiel 18, the current generation is culpable of idolatry and social injustice. While some individual motifs, such as the marking of the forehead of the righteous in chapter 9 and the punishment for the idolatrous inquirer and deceived prophet in chapter 14, are subordinate to a prominent theme of the nation's judgment, the author reacts against the view that God's judgment against Israel in Ezekiel is individualistic. He acknowledges the existence of individual motifs but argues that they are less prominent.[16] Ezekiel 19 portrays Israel/Judah as the recipients of severe judgment against them.

One could have anticipated Ezekiel 19 to be juxtaposed right next to chapter 17, where a similar parable occurs (the parable of two eagles and a vine). Both chapters 17 and 19 focus on the royal house through metaphors. In contrast, Ezekiel 18 provides a rationale for Judah's severe fall in chapter 19. In Ezekiel 18, the people express their complaints that they are being punished by God for their ancestors' sins (vv 1-2). They even question God's justice (v 29).

[15] Block, Ezekiel 1-24, 595.

[16] Paul Joyce, *Divine Initiative and Human Response in Ezekiel*, JSOT Supplement Series 51 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1989), 76.

Although God desires no one's death, Ezekiel 19 justifies Judah's death. This contradicts the people's false hope that God's promises to their ancestors guarantee divine blessings to them as well. It "offers concrete proof that Yahweh's administration of justice operates according to principle."[17] However, explicit mention of God's justice is not evident in Ezek 19, though it is implied in context.

3. Summary and Conclusion

Ezekiel 19 presents a unique perspective on Judah's fall. Its affirmation of Judah's death aligns well with the judgment message of the prophet in chapters 1-24. The lament genre is not unfamiliar to the prophetic message, and various motifs of this genre can be found in Ezekiel. The motif of divine abandonment is vividly depicted at the backdrop of Judah's fall. However, there is no explicit mention of confession of sin or defense for God's justice. The poem is a lament throughout, mourning the severe loss of Judah.

Ezekiel 19 fits well into Ezekiel's judgment oracles against Judah in chapters 1-24. The motif of divine abandonment is related to Judah's fall. The fall of Judah is complete and collective, with no reversal of the judgment. Everyone must undergo this severe judgment. However, Ezekiel 19 does not explicitly state Judah's sin or defend God's justice in punishing Judah. It merely mourns the loss.

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