

The Seven Cycles of the Seventh Oracle

- I. In the 10th year, in the 10th month, on the 12th day of the month: the word of YHWH came to me: Son of man (29:1)
- II. In the 27th year, in the 1st month, on the 1st day of the month the word of YHWH came to me: Son of man (29:17)
- III. [undated] the word of YHWH came to me: Son of man (30:1)
- IV. In the 11th year, in the 1st month, on the 7th day of the month the word of YHWH came to me: Son of man (30:20)
- V. In the 11th year, in the 3rd month, on the 1st day of the month the word of YHWH came to me: Son of man (31:1)
- VI. In the 12th year, in the 12th month, on the 1st day of the month the word of YHWH came to me: Son of man (32:1)
- VII. In the 12th year, in the 12th month, on the 15th day of the month the word of YHWH came to me: Son of man (32:17)

A sampling of key words or ideas and under which cycle you find them:

	I (29:1-16)	II (29:17-21)	III (30:1-19)	IV (30:20-26)	V (31)	VI (32:1-16)	VII (32:17-32)
Egypt as a sea monster or crocodile	yes					yes	
streams	yes					yes	
Plunder		yes	yes				
Assyria					yes		yes
Pharaoh	yes			yes	yes	yes	yes
Babylon		yes	yes	yes		yes	
Nebuchadnezzar		yes	yes				
Whom like in greatness/beauty?					yes		yes
Pit/Sheol/world below/lie with uncircumcised					yes		yes
Wail or lamentation			yes			yes	yes

This chart suggests that there may be some cycles that have more in common with another than others, which is worth further reflection. In particular there is much in common between cycles 1 and 6, 2 and 3, 4 and 6, and 5 and 7. Nevertheless, each cycle covers the same basic ground though the later ones concentrate on the final picture increasingly compared to earlier ones.

Summary of the Content of Each Cycle of the Seventh Oracle

Cycle I: Ezekiel 29:1-16

Makes fun of the myth comparing Pharaoh to the great sea monster but saying that YHWH will go fishing for him and catch him with a hook and feed him to the animals in the wilderness (apocalyptic picture) and do the same with the other fish of his streams.

40 year exile for Egypt and then restoration but they will be so small that Israel will not rely upon them any more.

Cycle II: Ezekiel 29:17-21

Nebuchadnezzar will have nothing to show for all the wealth of Tyre after its siege. But because YHWH holds that the laborer deserves his wages, Nebuchadnezzar will carry off the wealth of Egypt. Ends with line of promise regarding Israel.

Cycle III: Ezekiel 30:1-19

The minor nations in league with Egypt will fall. The wealth of Egypt will be plundered by Nebuchadnezzar. The daughters of Egypt will go into captivity (exile). Lamentation.

Cycle IV: Ezekiel 30:20-26

YHWH has broken Pharaoh's arm but will now break both of Pharaoh's arms so that he drops the sword and scatter the Egyptians among the nations (exile) and strengthen the arms of the king of Babylon and give him the sword of YHWH.

Cycle V: Ezekiel 31

Allegory of Assyria as a cedar in Lebanon, which was even the envy of the Garden of Eden, but now has been cut down. The picture of what happened to Assyria is a lesson for Egypt because they are next.

Cycle VI: Ezekiel 32:1-16

Allegory where Pharaoh is like the sea monster that YHWH will catch in a net. Lamentation.

Cycle VII: Ezekiel 32:17-32

Tour of the underworld itself in a six plus one pattern.

Note the shift from exile to underworld and growing lamentation.

An Initial Analysis of the Structure of Each Cycle:

Alternating Structure of Cycle I: Ezekiel 29:1-16

Behold, I am against you, Pharaoh king of Egypt, the great dragon that lies in the midst of his streams, that says, 'My Nile is my own; I made it for myself.' (29:3)

APOCALYPSE OF FISHING FOR THE SEA MONSTER / DRAGON AKA PHARAOH (29:4-6a)

Because you have been a staff of reed to the house of Israel; when they grasped you with the hand, you broke and tore all their shoulders; and when they leaned on you, you broke and made all their loins to shake (29:6b-7).

Therefore thus says the Lord YHWH: Behold I will bring a sword upon you, and will cut off from you man and beast, and the land of Egypt shall be a desolation and a waste.

Then they will know that I am YHWH (29:8-9b).

Because he said, 'The Nile is mine, and I made it,' therefore, behold, I am against you and against your streams (29:9c-10a)

UNINHABITABLE AND UNINHABITED LAND OF EGYPT FOR 40 YEARS (29:10b-12)

And it shall never again be the reliance of the house of Israel, recalling their iniquity, when they turn to them for aid (29:13-16)

Then they will know that I am the Lord YHWH (29:16).

Alternating Structure of Cycle II: Ezekiel 29:17-21

In the 27th year, in the 1st month, on the first day of the month, the word of YHWH came to me: (29:17)

COMPARE AND CONTRAST TYRE AND EGYPT:

Son of man, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon made his army labor hard against Tyre.

Every head was made bald, and every shoulder was rubbed bare,
yet neither (1) he nor (2) his army got anything from Tyre

to pay for the labor that he had performed against her (29:18).

Therefore, thus says the Lord YHWH: Behold, I will give the land of Egypt to Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon;

and he shall carry off its wealth and despoil it and plunder it;

and it shall be the wages for (2) his army. I have given (1) him the land of Egypt
as his payment for which (1) he labored, because (2) they worked for me,

CONCLUSION:

declares the Lord YHWH (29:19-20).

+ PROMISE FOR ISRAEL:

On that day I will cause a horn to spring up for the house of Israel, and I will open your lips among them. Then they will know that I am YHWH (29:21).

Structure of Cycle III: Ezekiel 30:1-19

Four Sub-Cycles marked with introductions: Thus says the Lord YHWH (30:2) or Thus says YHWH (30:6, 10, 13).

Alternating Structure of Cycle IV: Ezekiel 30:20-26

...the word of YHWH came to me: "Son of man, I have broken the arm of Pharaoh king of Egypt, and behold, it has not been bound up, to heal it by binding it with a bandage, so that it may become strong to wield the sword.

Therefore thus says the Lord YHWH: Behold, I am against Pharaoh king of Egypt and will break his arms, both the strong arm and the one that was broken, and I will make the sword fall from his hand.

I will scatter the Egyptians among the nations and disperse them through the countries.

And I will strengthen the arms of the king of Babylon and put my sword in his hand, but I will break the arms of Pharaoh, and he will groan before him like a man mortally wounded.

I will strengthen the arms of the king of Babylon, but the arms of Pharaoh shall fall. Then they shall know that I am YHWH, when I put my sword into the hand of the king of Babylon and he stretches it out against the land of Egypt.

And I will scatter the Egyptians among the nations and disperse them through the countries.

Then they will know that I am YHWH.

The Chiasm of Cycle V: Ezekiel 31

Say to Pharaoh king of Egypt and to his multitude: (31:2a)

“Whom are you like in your greatness?” (31:2b)

ASSYRIA = CEDAR IN LEBANON, THE ENVY OF TREES IN THE GARDEN OF EDEN (31:3-9)

Behold, Assyria was a cedar in Lebanon, with beautiful branches and forest shade, towering height, top among the clouds/the cedars in the garden of God could not rival it...no tree in the garden of God was its equal in beauty. I made it beautiful in the mass of its branches, and all the trees of Eden envied it that were in the garden of God.

CUT DOWN BY THE MOST RUTHLESS OF NATIONS (31:10-14)

“Therefore thus says the Lord YHWH: Because it towered high and set its top among the clouds, and its heart was proud of its height, I will give it in to the hand of a mighty one of the nations. He shall surely deal with it as its wickedness deserves. I have cast it out.

Foreigners, the most ruthless of nations, have cut it down and left it. ...”

THE CEDAR AND TREES OF EDEN IN THE UNDERWORLD (31:15-17)

Thus says the Lord YHWH: On the day the cedar went down to Sheol I cause mourning...And all the trees of Eden, the choice and best of Lebanon, all that drink water, were comforted in the world below. They also went down to Sheol with it, to those who are slain by the sword; yes, those who were its arm, who lived under its shadow among the nations.

“Whom are you like in glory and in greatness among the trees of Eden? You shall be brought down with the trees of Eden to the world below. You shall lie among the uncircumcised, with those who are slain by the sword” (31:18a-c).

This is Pharaoh and all his multitude (31:18d)

The Chiasm of Cycle VI: Ezekiel 32:1-16

Raise a lamentation over Pharaoh king of Egypt (32:2a)

You consider yourself a lion of the nations but you are like a dragon in the seas /sea monster, you burst forth in your rivers, trouble the waters with your feet, and foul their rivers (32:2b).

Thus says the Lord YHWH: ALLEGORY (32:3-8)

I will throw my net over you...cast you on the ground...cause all the birds of the heavens to settle on you...drench the land even to the mountains with your flowing blood...cover the heavens and make their stars dark...and put darkness on your land,

Declares the Lord YHWH!

CLIMAX (32:9-10)

I will trouble the hearts of many peoples, when I bring your destruction among the nations, into the countries that you have not known. I will make many peoples appalled at you, and the hair of their kings shall bristle with horror because of you, when I brandish my sword before them. They shall tremble every moment, every one for his own life, on the day of your downfall.

For thus says the Lord YHWH: INTERPRETATION (32:11-14)

The sword of the king of Babylon shall come upon you. I will cause your multitude to fall by the swords of mighty ones..they shall bring to ruin the pride of Egypt...and cause their rivers to run like oil,

Declares the Lord YHWH:

When I make the land of Egypt desolate, and when the land is desolate of all that fills it, when I strike down all who dwell in it, then they will know that I am YHWH (32:15).

This is a lamentation that shall be chanted; the daughters of the nations shall chant it; over Egypt, and over all her multitude, shall they chant it, declares the Lord YHWH (32:16).

The Seventh Cycle: A Tour of the Underworld

1. Assyria
2. Elam
3. Meshech-Tubal
4. Edom
5. Princes of the North
6. Sidonians
7. Egypt (all his multitude, Pharaoh and all his army, slain by the sword; slain by the sword, Pharaoh and all his multitude – two parts both ending with “declares the Lord YHWH”)

Davidson's article suggests these parallels, thus there are two parallel panels in for the seven oracles:

a. Oracles against first four Levantine nations: Ammon, Moab, Edom, Philistia (25)	a'. Oracles against last Levantine nation: Sidon (with implications for Israel) (28:20-26)
b. Judgment oracle vs. Tyre (A): introduction (26:1-6)	b'. Judgment oracle vs. Egypt (A): introduction (29:1-16)
c. Babylon as agent of divine judgment on Tyre (26:7-11)	c'. Babylon as agent of divine judgment on Egypt (29:17-30:19)
d. Judgment oracle vs. Tyre (A'): restatement (26:12-18)	d'. Judgment oracle vs. Egypt (A'): restatement (30:20-26)
e. Judgment oracle vs. Tyre (B): Tyre descends to the Pit (26:19-21)	e'. Judgment oracle vs. Egypt (B): Pharaoh and Egypt descend to the Pit (31:1-18)
f. Lamentation (qinah) for Tyre (27)	f'. Lamentation (qinah) for Pharaoh and Egypt (32:1-16)
g. Judgment oracle vs. Tyre (B'): prince of Tyre descends to the Pit (28:1-10)	g'. Judgment oracle vs. Egypt (B): Egypt and Pharaoh descend to the Pit (32:17-32)

This matches the text quite well, note that there are seven sections on each side, this is accomplished for the right side by combining cycles 2 and 3, which have much in common and besides which cycle 3 is missing the date part of the formula.