

Jeremiah 25:34

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Howl, ye shepherds, and cry; and wallow yourselves in the ashes, ye principal of the flock: for the days of your slaughter and of your dispersions are accomplished; and ye shall fall like a pleasant vessel.

Analysis

Howl, ye shepherds, and cry; and wallow yourselves in the ashes, ye principal of the flock: for the days of your slaughter and of your dispersions are accomplished; and ye shall fall like a pleasant vessel. The term *rō'îm* (רֹאִים, shepherds) refers to political and religious leaders who guided the people. The phrase *wěhitpallēšû* (וְהִתְפַּלֵּשׁוּ, wallow yourselves) describes extreme grief—rolling in ashes and dust as mourning ritual. The *'abbîrē haššō'n* (אֲבִירִי הַשּׁוֹן, principal/mighty ones of the flock) are the powerful elite—kings, nobles, priests.

The phrase *kî-mālē'û yěmēkem litbôah ûtēpûsôtêkem* (כִּי-מָלֵא יְמֵיכֶם לִטְבּוֹת וְתִפְצֹתִיכֶם) for the days of your slaughter and of your dispersions are accomplished) announces that the appointed time has arrived. The image *ûnēpâltem kiklî hemdâ* (עֲנֵפָלְתֶם כִּקְלִי חֵמָה), you shall fall like a pleasant vessel) compares leaders to valuable pottery shattered beyond repair. The irony is striking—those who should have shepherded God's flock faithfully instead led them to destruction and now face judgment themselves. Jesus condemned the Pharisees as blind guides (Matthew 23:16-24), and James warned that teachers face stricter judgment (James 3:1).

Historical Context

Judah's leaders—King Jehoiakim, his princes, the priests, false prophets—consistently led the people into sin and rejected God's warnings through Jeremiah. When Jerusalem fell, these leaders suffered specially severe judgment. King Zedekiah witnessed his sons' execution before having his eyes gouged out (2 Kings 25:7). Nobles were executed at Riblah (2 Kings 25:18-21). The leadership class was decimated, fulfilling this prophecy. Their failure to shepherd God's flock faithfully brought catastrophe upon themselves and those they led.

Related Passages

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Psalm 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Study Questions

1. How does the severe judgment on 'shepherds' (leaders) demonstrate the greater accountability of those who guide and teach God's people?
2. What does the image of leaders 'falling like a pleasant vessel' (shattered beyond repair) teach about the consequences of failed spiritual leadership?
3. In what ways might spiritual leaders today fail to shepherd God's people faithfully, and what accountability do they face?

Interlinear Text

אָדִיכִים	וְהַתְּפִלְשׁוּ	בְּרָעִים	זְעָקָה	בְּרָעִים	יְהִילָּה
Howl	ye shepherds	and cry	and wallow	yourselves in the ashes	ye principal
H3213	H7462	H2199	H6428		H117
בְּצָאָן	מְלָאָה	יְמִינָה	לְבָבְךָ		
of the flock	are accomplished	for the days	of your slaughter		
H6629	H4390	H3117	H2873		
סְמִינָה:	בְּכָלִים	וְתִפְלָתָה	וְתִפְלָתָה	וְתִפְלָתָה	וְתִפְלָתָה
and of your dispersions	and ye shall fall	vessel	like a pleasant		
H8600	H5307	H3627	H2532		

Additional Cross-References

Jeremiah 6:26 (Parallel theme): O daughter of my people, gird thee with sackcloth, and wallow thyself in ashes: make thee mourning, as for an only son, most bitter lamentation: for the spoiler shall suddenly come upon us.

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