

Jeremiah 25:38

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

He hath forsaken his covert, as the lion: for their land is desolate because of the fierceness of the oppressor, and because of his fierce anger.

Analysis

He hath forsaken his covert, as the lion: for their land is desolate because of the fierceness of the oppressor, and because of his fierce anger. The phrase ‘āzaḅ kakkēpîr sukkô (עָזַב כְּכַפִּיר סֻכּוֹ, he has forsaken his covert like the lion) employs lion imagery—God leaving His dwelling like a lion emerging from its lair to hunt. The Hebrew kēpîr (כַּפִּיר, young lion) emphasizes strength and ferocity. God's protective presence, which sheltered Judah like a lion guards its den, has been withdrawn. The nation now faces the full force of judgment without divine protection.

The phrase kî-hāyēṭâ ‘arṣām lěšammâ (כִּי-הָיְעָתָה אֶרְצָם לְשִׁמָּה, their land is desolate) describes the result—total devastation. The cause is twofold: mipnê ḥārôn hayyônâ ûmipnê ḥārôn ‘appô (מִפְּנֵי חֲרוֹן הַיּוֹנָה וּמִפְּנֵי חֲרוֹן אַפּוֹ, because of the fierceness of the oppressor and because of his fierce anger). The 'oppressor' is Babylon, but God's anger is the ultimate cause. Babylon serves as instrument of divine wrath. This chapter thus concludes where it began—with God's sovereignty over history, using nations to execute judgment while holding all accountable. The final words 'his fierce anger' remind us that sin is ultimately against God and must answer to Him.

Historical Context

The image of God forsaking His dwelling recalls Ezekiel's vision of God's glory departing the temple (Ezekiel 10-11). Without God's presence, the temple, city, and

land were vulnerable. Babylon's armies were the immediate cause of desolation, but the withdrawal of divine protection was the ultimate cause. When God's protective presence departed, judgment became inevitable. This principle continues—Jesus wept over Jerusalem: 'your house is left unto you desolate' (Matthew 23:38). When God's presence withdraws, desolation follows regardless of outward religious structures.

Related Passages

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Study Questions

1. What does the image of God 'forsaking his covert like a lion' teach about the terrifying reality of divine presence withdrawn in judgment?
2. How does this chapter's conclusion—attributing desolation to both Babylon's oppression and God's anger—illustrate divine sovereignty using human instruments?
3. In what ways might God's protective presence be withdrawing from churches or nations that maintain religious forms while rejecting His authority?

Interlinear Text

עַזַּב	כִּכְפֹּיִר	סֶכֶו	כִּי	הִיָּה	אֶרְצָם	לְשֹׁמֵה
He hath forsaken	as the lion	his covert	H3588	H1961	for their land	is desolate
H5800	H3715	H5520			H776	H8047
וּמִפְּנֵי	חֲרֹן	הַיּוֹנֵה	וּמִפְּנֵי	חֲרֹן	אָפוֹ:	
and because	of his fierce	of the oppressor	and because	of his fierce	anger	
H6440	H2740	H3238	H6440	H2740	H639	

Additional Cross-References

Jeremiah 4:7 (Parallel theme): The lion is come up from his thicket, and the destroyer of the Gentiles is on his way; he is gone forth from his place to make thy land desolate; and thy cities shall be laid waste, without an inhabitant.

Jeremiah 5:6 (Parallel theme): Wherefore a lion out of the forest shall slay them, and a wolf of the evenings shall spoil them, a leopard shall watch over their cities: every one that goeth out thence shall be torn in pieces: because their transgressions are many, and their backslidings are increased.

Hosea 5:14 (Parallel theme): For I will be unto Ephraim as a lion, and as a young lion to the house of Judah: I, even I, will tear and go away; I will take away, and none shall rescue him.

From KJV Study • kjvstudy.org