

Jeremiah 46:22

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

The voice thereof shall go like a serpent; for they shall march with an army, and come against her with axes, as hewers of wood.

Analysis

The voice thereof shall go like a serpent (קֹלָה כְּנָחֵשׁ יְלָה)—Egypt's once-mighty voice is reduced to a serpent's hiss (qolah kannachash), a whisper of former power. This evokes Genesis 3, where the serpent deceived Eve in Egypt-like abundance. **They shall march with an army, and come against her with axes, as hewers of wood** (כִּי בְּמַיִלָּה יְלָכְוּ וּבְקָרְדָּמוֹת בָּאוּ לְהָ) —the Babylonians approach with qaraddumot (axes), treating Egypt's armies like a forest to be cleared.

The serpent imagery is doubly significant: Egypt was symbolized by the cobra (uraeus) on Pharaoh's crown, representing royal power. Now that power is reduced to a helpless hissing. The contrast between serpent-voice and military might underscores Egypt's impotent protests against Babylon's timber-like efficiency.

Historical Context

The uraeus (cobra) was the primary symbol of Egyptian royal authority, worn on Pharaoh's crown as a protective deity. Ancient warfare often involved cutting through enemy positions like clearing timber, a metaphor Jeremiah's audience would immediately grasp. Babylonian military efficiency was legendary.

Related Passages

1 John 4:8 — God is love

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

Study Questions

1. How does the serpent imagery connect Egypt's judgment to the original curse in Genesis 3?
2. When has your voice been reduced from authority to mere protest in the face of God's will?
3. What does treating armies "as hewers of wood" teach about human military power before divine judgment?

Interlinear Text

וְבַקְרָדָמוֹת	יל	כִּי	בָּם	יל	כִּי	יל	שְׁכַנְתְּךָ	לְקֹל	הָ
The voice	like a serpent		H1980	H3588	with an army	H1980	against her with axes		H7134
H6963	H5175				H2428				

עָזִים:	לְ	הַ	בְּ	אָ	וְ	בְּ	חֹרֵב	כִּי	לְ
and come	H0	as hewers		of wood					
H935		H2404		H6086					

Additional Cross-References

Isaiah 14:8 (Parallel theme): Yea, the fir trees rejoice at thee, and the cedars of Lebanon, saying, Since thou art laid down, no feller is come up against us.

Isaiah 29:4 (Parallel theme): And thou shalt be brought down, and shalt speak out of the ground, and thy speech shall be low out of the dust, and thy voice shall be, as of one that hath a familiar spirit, out of the ground, and thy speech shall whisper out of the dust.

