

Jeremiah 48:17

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

All ye that are about him, bemoan him; and all ye that know his name, say, How is the strong staff broken, and the beautiful rod!

Analysis

All ye that are about him, bemoan him (נִדְּוּ לוֹ כָּל-סְבִיבָיו)—Jeremiah calls neighboring nations to lament Moab's fall. **How is the strong staff broken, and the beautiful rod!** (אֵיכָה נִשְׁבַּר מַטֵּה-עֹז מִקֵּל תִּפְאַרֶה)—The matteh oz (staff of strength) and maqel tif'arah (rod of beauty/glory) symbolize royal authority and national splendor. Both 'staff' and 'rod' signify dominion (Genesis 49:10; Psalm 110:2).

The rhetorical 'How!' (eykah, also beginning Lamentations) expresses shock at the reversal of fortunes. Nations that seemed permanently established—possessing both power (oz) and glory (tif'arah)—can be broken suddenly. This anticipates Revelation's lament over fallen Babylon: 'Alas, alas, that great city!' (Revelation 18:10, 16, 19).

Historical Context

Moab had maintained independence and regional influence for centuries, controlling the lucrative King's Highway trade route. The 'strong staff' and 'beautiful rod' likely reference both Moab's military power and its cultural prestige, including monumental architecture at cities like Dibon. Neighboring nations (Edom, Ammon, Arabian tribes) had commercial and diplomatic relations with Moab, making its fall economically and politically shocking.

Related Passages

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Psalms 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Study Questions

1. What contemporary 'strong staffs' and 'beautiful rods'—institutions, nations, or leaders—seem unbreakable but stand under divine judgment?
2. How should observing the fall of powerful entities affect our trust in worldly systems versus eternal kingdom values?
3. What is the proper balance between mourning others' calamities (as commanded here) and recognizing divine justice in judgment?

Interlinear Text

הִנֵּה דוֹ	לֹא	כָּל	סְבִיבָיו	וְכָל	יָדְעֵי י	
him bemoan	H0	H3605	All ye that are about	H3605	him and all ye that know	
H5110			H5439		H3045	
שֵׁם וְ	אָמַר וְ	אֵיכָה	נִשְׁבֵּר	מַטֵּה	עַז	מִקֵּל ל
his name	say	H349	broken	staff	How is the strong	rod
H8034	H559		H7665	H4294	H5797	H4731
וְתִפְאֶרֶת:						
and the beautiful						
H8597						

Additional Cross-References

Isaiah 9:4 (Parallel theme): For thou hast broken the yoke of his burden, and the staff of his shoulder, the rod of his oppressor, as in the day of Midian.

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