

Jeremiah 51:14

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

The LORD of hosts hath sworn by himself, saying, Surely I will fill thee with men, as with caterpillers; and they shall lift up a shout against thee.

Analysis

The LORD of hosts hath sworn by himself—the divine oath's strongest possible form, since no higher authority exists (Hebrews 6:13). God's self-oath guarantees absolute certainty. The title "LORD of hosts" (יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת, YHWH Tseva'ot) emphasizes sovereign command over heavenly and earthly armies—Babylon faces the Commander of all forces.

Surely I will fill thee with men, as with caterpillers—the imagery of locust swarms (יֵלֶק, yeleq, swarming locust) depicts invading armies' overwhelming numbers and destructive capacity. Just as locusts devour everything, so conquering armies will consume Babylon. **And they shall lift up a shout against thee**—the battle cry (הִידָּהּ, heidad, shout, war cry) celebrates victory. The shout raised against Babylon reverses her previous triumph shouts over conquered nations. The oppressor becomes oppressed; the destroyer, destroyed. Divine justice includes measure-for-measure retribution.

Historical Context

The Medo-Persian coalition included vast multinational forces—Medes, Persians, Elamites, and others—fulfilling the prophecy of being filled with men like locusts. Ancient Near Eastern armies often numbered in tens of thousands; the imagery of locust swarms aptly describes these massive forces. The 'shout' of victory was customary ancient warfare practice—conquering armies proclaimed triumph.

When Babylon fell, those she had oppressed celebrated her downfall, fulfilling this prophecy precisely.

Related Passages

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Study Questions

1. What does God's self-oath teach about the absolute certainty of His prophetic declarations?
2. How does the locust imagery warn about the consuming, unstoppable nature of divine judgment?
3. In what ways does measure-for-measure justice (Babylon hearing victory shouts as she had raised them) reveal God's fairness in judgment?

Interlinear Text

נִשְׁבַּעַ ע	יְהוָה ה	צָבָא וְת	בְּנַפְשׁוֹ	כִּי י	אִם	מְלֵאֲתָ יוֹ
hath sworn	The LORD	of hosts	by himself	H3588	H518	saying Surely I will fill
H7650	H3068	H6635	H5315			H4390
אַתָּם	כִּי לִלְק	וְעַנּוּ	עַל יוֹ	הִדָּד:		
thee with men	as with caterpillars	and they shall lift up			a shout	
H120	H3218	H6030		H5921		H1959

Additional Cross-References

Jeremiah 49:13 (References Lord): For I have sworn by myself, saith the LORD, that Bozrah shall become a desolation, a reproach, a waste, and a curse; and all the cities thereof shall be perpetual wastes.

Jeremiah 50:15 (References Lord): Shout against her round about: she hath given her hand: her foundations are fallen, her walls are thrown down: for it is the vengeance of the LORD: take vengeance upon her; as she hath done, do unto her.

Amos 6:8 (References Lord): The Lord GOD hath sworn by himself, saith the LORD the God of hosts, I abhor the excellency of Jacob, and hate his palaces: therefore will I deliver up the city with all that is therein.

Joel 2:25 (Parallel theme): And I will restore to you the years that the locust hath eaten, the cankerworm, and the caterpillar, and the palmerworm, my great army which I sent among you.