

Jeremiah 51:2

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And will send unto Babylon fanners, that shall fan her, and shall empty her land: for in the day of trouble they shall be against her round about.

Analysis

And will send unto Babylon fanners—the Hebrew zarim (זרים, foreigners, strangers) is a wordplay with zarah (זרה, to winnow, scatter). God sends 'foreign fanners' who will winnow Babylon like grain. **That shall fan her, and shall empty her land**—winnowing separates wheat from chaff; applied to Babylon, it means separating people from land, destroying the empire's coherence and prosperity.

For in the day of trouble they shall be against her round about—enemies encircle Babylon from all sides. The Medo-Persian coalition included diverse peoples—Medes, Persians, Elamites, and others—forming a comprehensive siege. The agricultural metaphor of winnowing conveys both judgment (separating valuable from worthless) and scattering (dispersion of population). Babylon scattered other nations; now she is scattered.

Historical Context

Cyrus's coalition included multiple ethnic groups—Persians, Medes, Elamites, and others—fulfilling the prophecy of 'fanners' from various origins. After conquering Babylon, the Persians did 'empty her land' by allowing conquered peoples (including Jews) to return to their homelands, depleting Babylon's captive workforce and diminishing its centrality. Subsequent revolts and Persian reprisals

further depopulated and weakened Babylon. The winnowing was thorough—what was once history's greatest empire became an abandoned ruin.

Related Passages

Psalm 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Study Questions

1. What does the winnowing metaphor teach about God's judgment—both its discriminating nature and its scattering effect?
2. How does Babylon's experience of being 'fanned' and 'emptied' after doing the same to others illustrate divine justice?
3. What hope does this verse offer to scattered and oppressed peoples that God will reverse their oppressors' fortunes?

Interlinear Text

בָּעֵד
of trouble
H7451

Additional Cross-References

Jeremiah 15:7 (Parallel theme): And I will fan them with a fan in the gates of the land; I will bereave them of children, I will destroy my people, since they return not from their ways.

Matthew 3:12 (Parallel theme): Whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.

Isaiah 41:16 (Parallel theme): Thou shalt fan them, and the wind shall carry them away, and the whirlwind shall scatter them: and thou shalt rejoice in the LORD, and shalt glory in the Holy One of Israel.

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