

Jeremiah 51:36

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Therefore thus saith the LORD; Behold, I will plead thy cause, and take vengeance for thee; and I will dry up her sea, and make her springs dry.

Analysis

Therefore thus saith the LORD; Behold, I will plead thy cause, and take vengeance for thee; and I will dry up her sea, and make her springs dry. God responds to Jerusalem's imprecatory prayer (v. 35) with a divine commitment to justice. **I will plead thy cause** uses *rav et rivekh* (רָב אֶת־רִיבָּךְ), employing legal terminology—God acts as advocate and judge for His people. This echoes Proverbs 22:23: 'the LORD will plead their cause.' The phrase combines forensic vindication with active intervention.

And take vengeance for thee translates *veniqamti et niqmatekh* (בְּקַמְתִּי אֶת־תְּךָ), using the intensive form—divine retribution that answers covenant violations. While personal vengeance is forbidden (Leviticus 19:18), God reserves the right to execute justice (Deuteronomy 32:35, Romans 12:19). **I will dry up her sea** likely refers to both Babylon's water system (the Euphrates and canal network that sustained the city) and symbolically to her military/economic power. *Yam* (ים, sea) can denote large rivers; *maqor* (מִקּוֹר, springs/fountains) suggests water sources sustaining life.

Historically, Cyrus diverted the Euphrates to enter Babylon (fulfilling this literally), but the drying also symbolizes removing the source of Babylon's strength and prosperity. Isaiah 44:27 prophesied similarly: 'That saith to the deep, Be dry, and I will dry up thy rivers.' This demonstrates God's sovereignty over creation and empires—He who controls waters controls nations.

Historical Context

This prophecy had literal fulfillment in 539 BC when Cyrus the Persian conquered Babylon by diverting the Euphrates River. Herodotus and other ancient historians describe how Persian engineers dug channels to redirect the river, allowing troops to enter through the riverbed. What made Babylon seemingly impregnable—its massive walls and water defenses—became the avenue of conquest. Over subsequent centuries, Babylon's canal system fell into disrepair, the region's fertility declined, and the once-great city was gradually abandoned. By the medieval period, Babylon was uninhabited ruins, exactly as prophesied. The 'drying up' was both immediate (Cyrus's conquest) and gradual (long-term decline). This pattern appears in Revelation 16:12, where the Euphrates is dried up to prepare for eschatological judgment, suggesting Babylon's fall prefigures final judgment on all godless powers.

Related Passages

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Study Questions

1. How does God's promise to 'plead thy cause' comfort those who suffer injustice but cannot obtain human justice?
2. What does the literal fulfillment of 'drying up her sea' teach about taking biblical prophecy seriously and expecting real historical outcomes?
3. How does this verse inform our understanding of divine vengeance as distinct from human revenge?

Interlinear Text

אַתָּה	בְּבָבָ	אַתָּה	לְכָ	רַ	אָמַר	הָנָנִי	יְהִי	הָנָנִי	אַתָּה	לְכָ	רַ	אָמַר	הָנָנִי	יְהִי	הָנָנִי	אַתָּה	לְכָ
H3651	H3541	Therefore thus saith			the LORD	H2005	Behold I will plead									H853	
		H559			H3068											H7378	
רַיְבָּ	רַיְבָּ	אַתָּה	וְנִקְרָמָתִ	רַיְבָּ	אַתָּה	נִקְרָמָתִ	רַיְבָּ	וּבְחַרְבָּתִ	אַתָּה	וּבְחַרְבָּתִ	אַתָּה	וּבְחַרְבָּתִ	אַתָּה	וּבְחַרְבָּתִ	אַתָּה	וּבְחַרְבָּתִ	
thy cause	and take vengeance	H853	H5358			H5360		and I will dry up	H853	H2717						her sea	H3220
H7379																	
אַתָּה	וְהַבְשֵׁתִ	אַתָּה	מַקְוָהָה														
dry	and make her springs	H853	H4726														
H3001																	

Additional Cross-References

Romans 12:19 (References Lord): Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.

Psalms 140:12 (References Lord): I know that the LORD will maintain the cause of the afflicted, and the right of the poor.

Jeremiah 50:38 (Parallel theme): A drought is upon her waters; and they shall be dried up: for it is the land of graven images, and they are mad upon their idols.

Isaiah 44:27 (Parallel theme): That saith to the deep, Be dry, and I will dry up thy rivers:

Deuteronomy 32:43 (Parallel theme): Rejoice, O ye nations, with his people: for he will avenge the blood of his servants, and will render vengeance to his adversaries, and will be merciful unto his land, and to his people.

Deuteronomy 32:35 (Parallel theme): To me belongeth vengeance, and recompence; their foot shall slide in due time: for the day of their calamity is at hand, and the things that shall come upon them make haste.

Revelation 16:12 (Parallel theme): And the sixth angel poured out his vial upon the great river Euphrates; and the water thereof was dried up, that the way of the kings of the east might be prepared.

Isaiah 43:14 (References Lord): Thus saith the LORD, your redeemer, the Holy One of Israel; For your sake I have sent to Babylon, and have brought down all their nobles, and the Chaldeans, whose cry is in the ships.

Psalms 107:33 (Parallel theme): He turneth rivers into a wilderness, and the watersprings into dry ground;

Proverbs 23:11 (Parallel theme): For their redeemer is mighty; he shall plead their cause with thee.

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