

Jeremiah 6:3

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

The shepherds with their flocks shall come unto her; they shall pitch their tents against her round about; they shall feed every one in his place.

Analysis

The shepherds with their flocks shall come unto her—the image of ro'im (רועים, shepherds) here refers to enemy military commanders who will lead their armies (edrehim, עדריהם, flocks) against Jerusalem. **They shall pitch their tents against her round about** depicts the siege tactics where armies surrounded the city completely, cutting off escape and supply. **They shall feed every one in his place** uses ra'ah (רָעָה, to feed/graze), continuing the pastoral metaphor but meaning the invading forces will systematically plunder and consume Jerusalem's resources sector by sector.

This vivid metaphor transforms the comforting image of shepherds into an instrument of judgment. Where God is the true Shepherd who feeds His flock (Psalm 23), these 'shepherds' come to devour. The organized, methodical nature of the attack ('every one in his place') reveals that this is not random chaos but divine judgment executed through pagan armies. This anticipates the Babylonian siege of 588-586 BC, where Nebuchadnezzar's commanders systematically dismantled Jerusalem's defenses. Jesus later wept over Jerusalem using similar language of encirclement (Luke 19:43-44), showing that rejection of God's word brings inevitable judgment.

Historical Context

Jeremiah 6 dates to the early reign of Josiah or Jehoiakim (circa 626-605 BC), warning of invasion from the north. The 'shepherds' metaphor would resonate with agricultural Judah, where shepherding was the primary economy. Military commanders were commonly called 'shepherds' in ancient Near Eastern texts. The siege tactics described—surrounding the city, pitching tents, systematic plundering—match Babylonian military practice documented in Assyrian and Babylonian annals. The fulfillment came when Nebuchadnezzar's officers surrounded Jerusalem completely, with each commander assigned a sector to attack (2 Kings 25:1-4). Archaeological evidence from the Lachish Letters confirms the systematic nature of Babylon's conquest of Judean cities before Jerusalem's fall.

Related Passages

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

1 John 4:8 — God is love

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Study Questions

1. How does the transformation of the 'shepherd' image from comfort to judgment illustrate the principle that God's blessings become curses when His people rebel?
2. What does the organized, methodical nature of this judgment teach about God's sovereignty over pagan nations?

Interlinear Text

אֶל יְהוָה	יָבֹאוּ	כָּעֵת וְ	וְעִדְרֵיהֶם	וְתִקַּע וְ	
H413	shall come	The shepherds	with their flocks	unto her they shall pitch	
	H935	H7462	H5739	H8628	
עַל יְהוָה	אֹהֲלֵיהֶם	סָבִיב יָבֹאוּ	כָּעֵת וְ	אֶת יֵשׁ	אֶת
H5921	their tents	against her round about	The shepherds	every one	H853
	H168	H5439	H7462	H376	
יְדוּ:					
in his place					
H3027					

Additional Cross-References

Luke 19:43 (Parallel theme): For the days shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side,