

Joel 3:16

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

The LORD also shall roar out of Zion, and utter his voice from Jerusalem; and the heavens and the earth shall shake: but the LORD will be the hope of his people, and the strength of the children of Israel.

Analysis

This verse presents a majestic vision of God as divine warrior defending His people while executing judgment on the nations. The imagery "The LORD also shall roar out of Zion" uses the Hebrew verb sha'ag, which describes a lion's terrifying roar—a sound indicating both power and imminent attack. Amos 1:2 uses identical language, establishing Zion (Jerusalem) as the throne from which God issues judgment. Unlike pagan deities confined to temples, Yahweh roars from His chosen dwelling place, asserting sovereign authority over all creation.

"And utter his voice from Jerusalem" parallels the roaring, using the Hebrew nathan qol (literally "give voice"), emphasizing divine speech that commands creation itself. The phrase connects to covenant theology—God speaks from the city where His temple stands, where His name dwells, and where He promised to meet His people. This establishes Jerusalem's centrality in redemptive history, pointing ultimately to the heavenly Jerusalem and Christ's millennial reign.

"The heavens and the earth shall shake" describes cosmic disturbance accompanying divine judgment. The Hebrew ra'ash means to quake, tremble, or shake violently—used for earthquakes and theophany. Haggai 2:6-7 and Hebrews 12:26-27 apply this shaking eschatologically to God's final judgment when everything created will be shaken, leaving only the unshakable kingdom. Yet immediately after this terrifying imagery comes remarkable comfort: "but the

LORD will be the hope of his people, and the strength of the children of Israel."

The contrast is stunning: the God who shakes heaven and earth is simultaneously the refuge (machseh) and fortress (ma'oz) of His covenant people. While judgment falls on the nations, God's people find safety in Him. This dual reality—God as judge of the wicked and defender of the righteous—runs throughout Scripture. The Hebrew machseh denotes a shelter or refuge, used frequently in the Psalms (Psalm 46:1, 91:2). Ma'oz means stronghold or fortress, a military term indicating impregnable defense. Together they assure believers that the Judge of all the earth is their protector, the Lion of Judah is their Shepherd, and the one who roars against enemies shelters His children.

Historical Context

Joel 3 (Hebrew Bible chapter 4) addresses the Valley of Jehoshaphat judgment, where God gathers all nations for final reckoning. This eschatological vision looks beyond Joel's immediate historical context to the Day of the LORD—a recurring prophetic theme describing God's decisive intervention in history. While Joel may have witnessed locust plagues and military threats (possibly during the divided monarchy or post-exilic period—dating is debated), chapter 3's scope is clearly cosmic and future-oriented.

The Valley of Jehoshaphat's location is uncertain—possibly the Kidron Valley between Jerusalem and the Mount of Olives, or a symbolic name meaning "Yahweh judges." What matters is the theological geography: God summons nations to Jerusalem for judgment. This anticipates New Testament eschatology, particularly Revelation 14:14-20's harvest of judgment and Zechariah 14's battle for Jerusalem.

The phrase about God roaring from Zion would resonate powerfully with ancient Israelites. Lions were known throughout the ancient Near East, and their roar was proverbially terrifying (Proverbs 19:12, 20:2). Applying this imagery to Yahweh communicates His terrifying power against enemies while assuring His people. Peter quotes Joel's Spirit-outpouring prophecy at Pentecost (Acts 2:16-21), establishing that Joel's visions bridge the ages from ancient Israel to the church age to Christ's return. The shaking of heaven and earth appears in Jesus's Olivet

Discourse (Matthew 24:29), Paul's writings (2 Thessalonians 1:7-10), and Revelation's bowl judgments (Revelation 16:17-21).

Related Passages

Psalm 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Study Questions

1. How does the image of God as a roaring lion shape your understanding of His holiness, justice, and power?
2. What does it mean that the God who shakes heaven and earth is simultaneously your hope and strength?
3. How should believers live in light of coming cosmic judgment while finding refuge in God?
4. In what ways does this passage comfort the persecuted church while warning the rebellious?
5. How does Jesus Christ fulfill the role of both the Lion of Judah (Revelation 5:5) and the Lamb who was slain?

Interlinear Text

קֹלׁוּ נִתְּנָהָהּ וּמִרְשָׁלָם מִצְּרָיִם וְיִהְיוֹה
The LORD out of Zion also shall roar from Jerusalem and utter his voice
H3068 H6726 H7580 H3389 H5414 H6963

מִתְּחַזֵּק הַמִּתְּחַזֵּק וְיִהְיוֹה אֶת־הָרָקֶב וְיִהְיוֹה
shall shake and the heavens and the earth The LORD will be the hope
H7493 H8064 H776 H3068 H4268

וְלֹעֵם וְלֹבֶב וְלֹמֶעֶת וְלֹשֶׁן־יִשְׂרָאֵל:
of his people and the strength of the children of Israel
H5971 H4581 H1121 H3478

Additional Cross-References

Amos 1:2 (References Lord): And he said, The LORD will roar from Zion, and utter his voice from Jerusalem; and the habitations of the shepherds shall mourn, and the top of Carmel shall wither.

Haggai 2:6 (References Lord): For thus saith the LORD of hosts; Yet once, it is a little while, and I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land;

Isaiah 42:13 (References Lord): The LORD shall go forth as a mighty man, he shall stir up jealousy like a man of war: he shall cry, yea, roar; he shall prevail against his enemies.

Proverbs 18:10 (References Lord): The name of the LORD is a strong tower: the righteous runneth into it, and is safe.

Jeremiah 16:19 (References Lord): O LORD, my strength, and my fortress, and my refuge in the day of affliction, the Gentiles shall come unto thee from the ends of the earth, and shall say, Surely our fathers have inherited lies, vanity, and things wherein there is no profit.

Isaiah 51:16 (Parallel theme): And I have put my words in thy mouth, and I have covered thee in the shadow of mine hand, that I may plant the heavens, and lay the foundations of the earth, and say unto Zion, Thou art my people.

Psalms 61:3 (Parallel theme): For thou hast been a shelter for me, and a strong tower from the enemy.

Ezekiel 38:19 (References Israel): For in my jealousy and in the fire of my wrath have I spoken, Surely in that day there shall be a great shaking in the land of Israel;

Revelation 16:18 (Parallel theme): And there were voices, and thunders, and lightnings; and there was a great earthquake, such as was not since men were upon the earth, so mighty an earthquake, and so great.

Psalms 18:2 (References Lord): The LORD is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; my God, my strength, in whom I will trust; my buckler, and the horn of my salvation, and my high tower.

