

# Zechariah 11:2

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Howl, fir tree; for the cedar is fallen; because the mighty are spoiled: howl, O ye oaks of Bashan; for the forest of the vintage is come down.

## Analysis

**Howl, fir tree; for the cedar is fallen; because the mighty are spoiled: howl, O ye oaks of Bashan; for the forest of the vintage is come down.** This verse extends the lament, using parallel tree imagery to depict comprehensive judgment. The "**fir tree**" (berosh, בְּרוֹשׁ, likely cypress) is commanded to "**howl**" (yalel, יָלַל)—wail in mourning—because the superior cedar has fallen. If the mighty cedar cannot stand, how shall the lesser trees survive?

The phrase "**the mighty are spoiled**" (addirim shuddadu, אֲדִירִים שֻׁדְּדוּ) moves from botanical metaphor to direct statement: the powerful, noble ones are devastated. "Spoiled" means plundered, destroyed, laid waste. The "**oaks of Bashan**" (allonei Bashan, אֲלֹנֵי בָשָׁן) were famous for their strength and size (Isaiah 2:13; Ezekiel 27:6). Bashan, east of the Jordan, was known for its fertile plains and massive oaks used in shipbuilding. Their "**forest of the vintage**" (ya'ar ha-batzir, יַעַר הַבָּצִיר)—the dense, impenetrable forest—has "come down," meaning been cut down or destroyed.

The escalating imagery from cedars to firs to oaks depicts total devastation across the land. This prophesies the comprehensive judgment falling on Israel's leadership (the "mighty") when they reject God's Shepherd. Jesus wept over Jerusalem, foreseeing this very destruction (Luke 19:41-44).

## Historical Context

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Bashan was the region northeast of the Sea of Galilee, part of Israel's territory during the united monarchy. Its oaks were proverbial for strength (Amos 2:9 describes the Amorites as "strong as the oaks of Bashan"). The imagery would resonate powerfully with Zechariah's audience: if even Bashan's mighty oaks fall, nothing can withstand the coming judgment.

The historical fulfillment came in stages. The Maccabean period saw desecration and conflict. But the ultimate fulfillment was AD 70, when Rome's legions destroyed Jerusalem so thoroughly that Josephus wrote the city looked as though it had never been inhabited. The temple was burned, the priesthood ended, and the sacrificial system ceased—exactly as prophesied. The "mighty" (Jewish leaders who rejected Jesus) were indeed "spoiled." Over a million Jews died in the siege, and the survivors were enslaved or scattered.

## Related Passages

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**John 15:13** — Greatest form of love

**1 John 4:8** — God is love

## Study Questions

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1. How does the image of lesser trees (fir, oaks) falling after the cedar warn that when leadership fails, the entire nation suffers?
2. What does this comprehensive judgment teach about the consequences of corporate rejection of God's provision?
3. In what ways do Christians today risk similar judgment by rejecting Christ's shepherding in favor of human leadership?

## Interlinear Text

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הִיל ילו	בְּרוֹשׁ	כִּי	נָפַל	אֶרֶז	אֲשֶׁר	אֲדִיר ים
<b>Howl</b>	<b>fir tree</b>	H3588	<b>is fallen</b>	<b>for the cedar</b>	H834	<b>because the mighty</b>
H3213	H1265		H5307	H730		H117

נִשְׁדָּדוּ	הִיל ילו	אֵלֹנֵי י	בְּשָׁן	כִּי	יָבֹד	יַעַר
<b>are spoiled</b>	<b>Howl</b>	<b>O ye oaks</b>	<b>of Bashan</b>	H3588	<b>is come down</b>	<b>for the forest</b>
H7703	H3213	H437	H1316		H3381	H3293

הַבָּצֹר:  
**of the vintage**  
H1208