

# 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, בָּרוֹשׁ, likely cypress) is commanded to "howl" (yalel, יַלֵּל)—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, אֲדָרִים שָׁׁדְּדָו) 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, אֱלֹנִי בָּשָׁן) 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 הַבָּצֵר)—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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אָזֶר יְמָן אֲשֶׁר רָאָז  
because the mighty  
הַיּוֹלֶד הַיּוֹלֶד הַיּוֹלֶד  
Howl fir tree is fallen for the cedar  
H3213 H1265 H3588 H5307 H730 H834 H117

שָׁחַק דָּוָן אַלְזָגִים הַיּוֹלֶד  
is come down for the forest  
are spoiled Howl O ye oaks of Bashan  
H7703 H3213 H437 H1316 H3588 H3381 H3293

הַבָּצָר  
of the vintage  
H1208

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