

Zechariah 11:3

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

There is a voice of the howling of the shepherds; for their glory is spoiled: a voice of the roaring of young lions; for the pride of Jordan is spoiled.

Analysis

There is a voice of the howling of the shepherds; for their glory is spoiled: a voice of the roaring of young lions; for the pride of Jordan is spoiled. The lament shifts from trees to "**shepherds**" (ro'im, רֹעִים) and "**young lions**" (kephirim, כִּפְרִים), both representing Israel's leaders. The "**howling**" (yelalah, יִלְלָה) and "**roaring**" (sha'agah, שָׁאָגָה) are cries of anguish—the leaders who should have protected God's flock now wail over their own destruction.

"For their glory is spoiled" (ki shuddad adartem, כִּי שֻׁדְּדָד אֲדַרְתֶּם) explains the shepherds' anguish: their majesty, honor, and authority are devastated. The term adarah can mean a glorious robe or mantle (1 Kings 19:13, 19), symbolizing office and authority. Israel's shepherds (kings, priests, prophets) will lose their positions and prestige. The "**pride of Jordan**" (ge'on ha-Yarden, גִּּיאֹן הַיַּרְדֵּן) refers to the Jordan River's thickets where lions once dwelled (Jeremiah 49:19; 50:44). Even the lions' impenetrable refuge is destroyed.

This verse connects the botanical imagery (vv. 1-2) with the shepherd allegory that follows (vv. 4-17). Israel's leaders—the shepherds who should feed the flock—have failed, leading to national judgment. Jesus explicitly condemned the religious leaders of His day as false shepherds (Matthew 23; John 10:12-13).

Historical Context

In Zechariah's time, the Jewish community had returned from exile with renewed hope for restoration. Yet this prophecy warns that future unfaithful shepherds will bring renewed judgment. Throughout Israel's history, corrupt leadership led to national disaster: wicked kings led to Assyrian and Babylonian conquest, and corrupt priests in Jesus's day collaborated with Rome while rejecting Messiah.

The "pride of Jordan" being spoiled had literal fulfillment: the Jordan valley's thick vegetation (where lions once lived) was devastated during Rome's campaign against Jewish resistance. But the deeper meaning is spiritual: the leaders' pride—their self-exaltation and rejection of God's authority—brought judgment. The Pharisees, Sadducees, and chief priests who rejected Jesus lost everything in AD 70: the temple, the priesthood, national sovereignty, and their positions of power.

Related Passages

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Study Questions

1. How does the imagery of shepherds and lions howling over their lost glory warn against leadership motivated by pride and self-interest rather than service?
2. What responsibility do spiritual leaders bear for the state of God's people, and what judgment awaits those who fail in their calling?
3. How does Jesus as the Good Shepherd contrast with the false shepherds described here?

Interlinear Text

ק וּל	יִלֵּל ת	הִרְעֵ ים	כִּי	שָׂדֶד	אִדְתָּם
There is a voice	of the howling	of the shepherds	H3588	is spoiled	for their glory
H6963	H3215	H7462		H7703	H155

ק וּל	שָׂאֵג ת	כְּפִירֵ ים	כִּי	שָׂדֶד	גָּא וֹן
There is a voice	of the roaring	of young lions	H3588	is spoiled	for the pride
H6963	H7581	H3715		H7703	H1347

יַרְדֵּן:
of Jordan
H3383

Additional Cross-References

Jeremiah 50:44 (Parallel theme): Behold, he shall come up like a lion from the swelling of Jordan unto the habitation of the strong: but I will make them suddenly run away from her: and who is a chosen man, that I may appoint over her? for who is like me? and who will appoint me the time? and who is that shepherd that will stand before me?