

## **A Taunt-Song Against Bavel ~ Part 1** **Yesha'yahu 14:1-11**

In my last post, we moved on to the next section of the **Book of Yesha'yahu** in **A Prophecy Against Bavel ~ Part 1** in **Yesha'yahu 13:1-10**. In this post, we learn that God promises to restore **Isra'el** and after they have rested, they will sing **A Taunt-Song Against Bavel ~ Part 1** in **Yesha'yahu 14:1-11**.

***<sup>1</sup> For Adonai will have compassion on Ya'akov - He will once again choose Isra'el and resettle them in their own land, where foreigners will join them, attaching themselves to the house of Ya'akov. <sup>2</sup> Peoples will take and escort them to their homeland, and the house of Isra'el will possess them in the land of Adonai as male and female slaves. They will take their captors captive and rule over their oppressors.***

A prophecy anticipating the restoration of God's people appears amid the prophecy against **Bavel**. While this seems awkward, **Bavel's** fall correlates with the rise of a restored **Y'hudah**. Indeed, this restoration provides the context for the taunt song against **Bavel's** king in the following verses. Just as God chose **Isra'el** in Egypt and freed them from bondage, He will do so again in Mesopotamia. As foreigners traveled with God's people from Egypt, they will do so again. **Isra'el** had been the slave of the nations; now the nations will serve God's people.

***<sup>3</sup> Then, when Adonai gives you [Isra'el] rest from your suffering and trouble and from the hard service imposed on you, <sup>4</sup> you will take up this taunt-song against the king of Bavel: "At last the oppressor is stilled, his arrogance is ended!"***

The song has its setting after **Isra'el's** return to the land. The song is a song of contempt or a taunt song. It was directed toward the king of **Bavel**. The song speaks as if the king is a definite individual, but the lack of a specific name may mean that the king is depicted as the apex of the imperialistic machine that oppressed the people of God.

Many historians and archaeologists believe that the empire of **Bavel** was the greatest empire in the history of humanity. It was an incredible city, a mystical, somewhat magical place in the eyes of the people. And yet here we are told that this golden city would cease to exist. In Revelation 18:2, we see the same sort of phrase when we read that the false commercial system and the religious system will be destroyed.

***<sup>5</sup> Adonai has broken the staff of the wicked, the scepter of the rulers,***

The king held the staff and the scepter, and they represented his power. The staff may be a shepherd's staff, and it could refer to the king's responsibility to shepherd the people. The scepter was an ornamented mace used as a weapon, representing the king's fearsome power. The fact that God has broken them indicates His superior power.

***<sup>6</sup> which furiously struck down peoples with unceasing blows, angrily beating down nations with relentless persecution. <sup>7</sup> The whole earth is at rest and quiet. They break into song. <sup>8</sup> The cypresses rejoice over you, with the cedars of the L'vanon - 'Now that you are laid low, no one comes to cut us down.'***

It is not just the inhabitants of the earth, and the people of God, who rejoice over **Bavel's** downfall, but even the trees, which had been cut down to produce siege works.

The forests of L'vanon were considered a treasury by kings of the ancient world. The timber from the cedar trees was essential for temples and palaces. Kings boasted of having extended their conquests to these forests and of cutting trees from it. Invading them and taking their resources was the greatest adventure of all.

*<sup>9</sup> "Sh'ol below is stirred up to meet you when you come. It awakens for you the ghosts of the dead who were leaders on earth; it makes all the kings of the nation's arise from their thrones. <sup>10</sup> They all greet you with these words: 'Now you are as weak as we are, you have become like us! <sup>11</sup> Your pride has been brought down to Sh'ol with the music of your lyres, under you a mattress of maggots, over you a blanket of worms.' ~ Isaiah 14:1-11 (CJB)*

*Sh'ol* refers to the grave and in some contexts signifies the underworld. In these verses, *Sh'ol* is personified and pictured as warmly greeting its new citizen, the king of **Bavel**. Indeed, *Sh'ol* will rouse all the spirits of the departed kings to greet the king of **Bavel** when he arrives in the realm of the dead.

Though conscious, the spirits of the departed kings will confess that they are weak in the afterlife. This weakness contrasts with the oppressive power they had exercised in life.

Maggots and worms will crawl over the corpse in the grave. This plays on the idea that *Sh'ol* was considered both the grave and the underworld.

I have attached an interesting and short article on the **Afterlife Beliefs in Israel and the Ancient Near East** prepared by The IVP Bible Background Commentary – Old Testament.

In my next post, we will continue to explore **A Taunt-Song Against Bavel ~ Part 2** in **Yesha'yahu 14: 12-23**.