

Jehovah-Sabaoth

³³ *“Thus says the Lord of hosts: The people of Israel are oppressed, and the people of Judah with them. All who took them captive have held them fast; they refuse to let them go. ³⁴ Their Redeemer is strong; the Lord of hosts is his name. He will surely plead their cause, that he may give rest to the earth, but unrest to the inhabitants of Babylon. – Jeremiah 50:33-34 ESV*

YHWH-Tsabaoth – the LORD of Hosts. This name occurs 71 times in the Book of Jeremiah. The book’s author repeatedly refers to Yahweh by this distinctive designation to remind his audience of God’s sovereign power and authority. The people of Judah were guilty of turning their backs on God by violating their covenant commitment to Him. Rather than worship Him as the one true God, they had committed spiritual adultery with the false gods of the surrounding nations. As a result, God gave Jeremiah a commission to deliver His message of pending judgment to the disobedient nation of Judah.

“Out of the north disaster shall be let loose upon all the inhabitants of the land. For behold, I am calling all the tribes of the kingdoms of the north, declares the Lord, and they shall come, and every one shall set his throne at the entrance of the gates of Jerusalem, against all its walls all around and against all the cities of Judah. And I will declare my judgments against them, for all their evil in forsaking me. They have made offerings to other gods and worshiped the works of their own hands.” – Jeremiah 1:14-16 ESV

God warned Jeremiah that his job would not be easy because his audience would not be receptive to his message.

“They will fight against you, but they shall not prevail against you, for I am with you, declares the Lord, to deliver you.” – Jeremiah 1:19 ESV

Jeremiah would deliver God’s message of repentance but would have few takers. Despite his warnings of pending judgment, the stubborn people of Judah would refuse to change their ways. Hundreds of years earlier, the northern kingdom of Israel had received the same message and failed to take God’s warning seriously. The result was their destruction at the hands of the Assyrians. Now, it was Judah’s turn to heed God’s call or face similar consequences. Jeremiah attempted to use Israel’s fall to motivate the reluctant people of Judah. He delivered God’s stinging indictment on Judah’s refusal to learn from the demise of their northern neighbor.

“I divorced faithless Israel because of her adultery. But that treacherous sister Judah had no fear, and now she, too, has left me and given herself to prostitution. Israel treated it all so lightly—she thought nothing of committing adultery by worshiping idols made of wood and stone. So now the land has been polluted. But despite all this, her faithless sister Judah has never sincerely returned to me. She has only pretended to be sorry. I, the

Lord, have spoken!” – Jeremiah 3:8-10 NLT

Just as God used the Assyrians to mete out punishment on the disobedient nation of Israel, He would call on the Babylonians to serve as His agents of judgment against Judah.

*Therefore thus says **the Lord, the God of hosts...***

*“Behold, I am bringing against you
a nation from afar, O house of Israel,
declares the Lord.*

It is an enduring nation;

it is an ancient nation,

*a nation whose language you do not know,
nor can you understand what they say.*

Their quiver is like an open tomb;

they are all mighty warriors.

They shall eat up your harvest and your food;

they shall eat up your sons and your daughters;

they shall eat up your flocks and your herds;

they shall eat up your vines and your fig trees;

your fortified cities in which you trust

they shall beat down with the sword.” – Jeremiah 5:14, 15-17 ESV

It is important to note that God refers to Himself as *YHWH-Tsabaoth*, the Lord of Hosts. The second part of His name is *ts^ebâ’âh* in Hebrew and carries various meanings, including “that which goes forth, army, war, warfare, host.” In some modern translations, it is rendered “the Lord of Armies.” *The New Living Translation* adds a further distinction by rendering it “the Lord of Heaven’s Armies.”

However, within the context of the Book of Jeremiah, it makes more sense to view this name as a reminder of God’s sovereign control over all the armies of the earth. He has the power and authority to command kings and nations to do His bidding. As the Lord of Armies, God can orchestrate the actions of foreign powers and utilize their vast resources to accomplish His divine will. Once again, using the name *YHWH-Tsabaoth*, Jeremiah delivers a power message regarding God’s sovereign power.

But the God of Israel is no idol!

*He is the Creator of everything that exists,
including his people, his own special possession.*

The Lord of Heaven’s Armies is his name!

“You are my battle-ax and sword,”

says the Lord.

*“With you I will shatter nations
and destroy many kingdoms.*

*With you I will shatter armies—
 destroying the horse and rider,
 the chariot and charioteer.
 With you I will shatter men and women,
 old people and children,
 young men and young women.
 With you I will shatter shepherds and flocks,
 farmers and oxen,
 captains and officers.” – Jeremiah 51:19-21 NLT*

God would use the Babylonians as His instrument of judgment against His own chosen people. The forces of King Nebuchadnezzar would operate under God’s command, carrying out His will and accomplishing His divine plan for Judah’s destruction. But, as the Lord of Armies, God would also carry out His vengeance against the Babylonians for their role in the fall of Judah.

*“I will repay Babylon
 and the people of Babylonia
 for all the wrong they have done
 to my people in Jerusalem,” says the Lord. – Jeremiah 51:24 NLT*

Neither Nebuchadnezzar nor his people did what they did out of coercion or against their will. God simply used their desire for global conquest to carry out His judgment against the nation of Judah. But they would pay dearly for their will destruction of the city of Jerusalem and the deportation of God’s people.

*This is what the Lord of Heaven’s Armies says:
 “The thick walls of Babylon will be leveled to the ground,
 and her massive gates will be burned.
 The builders from many lands have worked in vain,
 for their work will be destroyed by fire!” – Jeremiah 51:58 NLT*

Jeremiah was one of the few prophets who lived to see the fall of Judah and the deportation of the people. He had to watch as the city of Jerusalem was ransacked and the Temple destroyed. He witnessed the captives being led in chains as they made their way to Babylon. Through it all, he continued to serve as God’s spokesman. When the captives were led away, he gave them a scroll containing all of the judgments YHWH-Tsabaoth would bring against the Babylonians. The Lord of Armies was not done.

Jeremiah had recorded on a scroll all the terrible disasters that would soon come upon Babylon—all the words written here. He said to Seraiah, “When you get to Babylon, read aloud everything on this scroll. Then say, ‘Lord, you have said that you will destroy Babylon so that neither people nor animals will remain here. She will lie empty and abandoned forever.’ When you have finished reading the scroll, tie it to a stone and throw it into the Euphrates River. Then say, ‘In this same way Babylon and her people

will sink, never again to rise, because of the disasters I will bring upon her.” – Jeremiah 51:60-64 NLT

God would repay the Babylonians for their role in Judah’s destruction. He would muster other earthly armies against them, bringing the once mighty nation of Babylon to its knees. But more importantly, *YHWH-Tsabaoth* would restore His people. The prophet Isaiah records God’s message of Babylon’s destruction and Judah’s deliverance.

*“Come down, virgin daughter of Babylon, and sit in the dust.
For your days of sitting on a throne have ended.
O daughter of Babylonia, never again will you be
the lovely princess, tender and delicate.
Take heavy millstones and grind flour.
Remove your veil, and strip off your robe.
Expose yourself to public view.
You will be naked and burdened with shame.
I will take vengeance against you without pity.” – Isaiah 47:1-3 NLT*

Then Isaiah adds these comforting words:

*Our Redeemer, whose name is the Lord of Heaven’s Armies,
is the Holy One of Israel. – Isaiah 47:104 NLT*

God is powerful and sovereign over all. He controls kings and nations. He orchestrates the affairs of the world and uses earthly powers to accomplish His divine will. As Isaiah puts it, “The nations of the world are worth nothing to him. In his eyes they count for less than nothing—mere emptiness and froth” (Isaiah 40:17 NLT). Interestingly enough, it was Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, who made the following insightful disclosure concerning God’s power and sovereignty as *YHWH-Tsabaoth*.

*“His rule is everlasting,
and his kingdom is eternal.
All the people of the earth
are nothing compared to him.
He does as he pleases
among the angels of heaven
and among the people of the earth.
No one can stop him or say to him,
‘What do you mean by doing these things?’” – Daniel 4:34-35 NLT*

Jehovah-Sabaoth is, as Nebuchadnezzar concluded, “the King of heaven. All his acts are just and true, and he is able to humble the proud” (Daniel 4:37 NLT). He rules and reigns over all, including the armies of heaven and the armies of this world. He has the power to rebuke and redeem, destroy and restore, and to judge and justify. He is sovereign, all-powerful, all-

knowing, and always in complete control of all things at all times. He is the Lord of Armies and He can always be trusted to use His power to accomplish His purposes for the glory of His name and the good of His people.

*Who is this King of glory?
The Lord of hosts,
he is the King of glory! – Psalm 24:10 ESV*

