

Daniel 4:10

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Thus were the visions of mine head in my bed; I saw, and behold a tree in the midst of the earth, and the height thereof was great.

Analysis

Nebuchadnezzar begins recounting his dream vision (רֵנֶה/chezo, vision/sight) seen 'upon my bed'—emphasizing this was divine revelation during sleep, not waking imagination. The tree 'in the midst of the earth' suggests centrality and prominence, visible to all. Trees frequently symbolize kingdoms or rulers in biblical literature (Ezekiel 31, Psalm 1, Matthew 13:31-32). The phrase 'the height thereof was great' foreshadows the tree's—and thus the king's—pride and exaltation. This opening establishes the dream's scope: a universal symbol (visible from earth's center) representing something of cosmic significance. The imagery draws from ancient Near Eastern art and literature where the world-tree (arbor mundi) represented cosmic order, divine kingship, or imperial dominion.

Historical Context

Tree imagery pervaded ancient Near Eastern royal propaganda. Assyrian and Babylonian reliefs depicted stylized 'tree of life' symbols representing royal authority and cosmic order. Kings were metaphorically described as trees providing shade and sustenance to subjects. Nebuchadnezzar himself planted extensive royal gardens and parks in Babylon—the famed Hanging Gardens represented his arboreal ambitions. The dream's tree 'in the midst of the earth' with worldwide visibility parallels Nebuchadnezzar's imperial self-understanding: Babylon as the center of civilization, his reign extending to earth's ends.

Related Passages

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Psalm 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Study Questions

1. What modern 'trees'—institutions, leaders, or ideologies—seem to stand 'in the midst of the earth' with worldwide influence?
2. How does the tree's central position and great height symbolize human pride and self-exaltation?
3. Why does Scripture frequently use tree imagery to represent kingdoms and rulers?

Interlinear Text

וְאֵלֹהִים Thus were the visions	יְמִינֵי of mine head	רָאשׁ in	עַל my bed	חִזְקָה H2370	בָּנָה I saw	וְאֵלֹהִים and behold
H2376	H7217	H5922	H4903	H1934	H431	

אֵל a tree	בְּגֹזֶל in the midst	אָרֶץ of the earth	הַרְוֹם and the height	שְׁגִיאָה thereof was great
H363	H1459	H772	H7314	H7690

Additional Cross-References

Daniel 4:5 (Parallel theme): I saw a dream which made me afraid, and the thoughts upon my bed and the visions of my head troubled me.

Jeremiah 12:2 (Parallel theme): Thou hast planted them, yea, they have taken root: they grow, yea, they bring forth fruit: thou art near in their mouth, and far from their reins.

