

Daniel 5:6

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Then the king's countenance was changed, and his thoughts troubled him, so that the joints of his loins were loosed, and his knees smote one against another.

Analysis

The king's terrified response to the supernatural handwriting: his countenance changed, thoughts troubled him, joints of his loins loosened, and knees knocked together. This physical description depicts complete terror—loss of color (countenance changed), mental distress (thoughts troubled), loss of strength (loins loosened suggesting collapse of strength/courage), and uncontrollable trembling (knees knocking). The Hebrew/Aramaic idiom 'loins loosened' may suggest loss of bladder control—ultimate humiliation for a proud monarch. This immediate transformation from drunken revelry to abject terror demonstrates God's power to humble pride instantly. One moment Belshazzar commanded thousands, mocked God, and reveled; the next he's paralyzed with fear. This illustrates Proverbs 16:18 ('Pride goeth before destruction') and shows that God's judgments, when they come, are unmistakable and terrifying.

Historical Context

Ancient Near Eastern kings prided themselves on courage and composure. Royal ideology presented monarchs as fearless, divinely empowered, and unshakeable. Belshazzar's public terror before his entire court (a thousand nobles, v.1) represented complete loss of regal dignity. The physical symptoms described—trembling, weakness, losing control—match modern descriptions of panic attacks or extreme fear responses. That a supernatural sign could instantly reduce a powerful monarch to this state demonstrated the living God's superiority over

Babylon's impotent idols. For Jewish exiles witnessing or hearing of this event, it vindicated Yahweh's supremacy and promised eventual deliverance from captivity.

Related Passages

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Study Questions

1. What does Belshazzar's instant transformation from pride to terror teach about human vulnerability before God?
2. How do God's judgments unmistakably identify themselves, leaving no room for doubt or rationalization?
3. Why is it significant that the king's terror was publicly visible to his entire court?

Interlinear Text

וְבָהֲלֹתָה אָדָם מֶלֶךְ אָדָם זָיו הַיְלָדָה שָׁב וְהִי וְכָעִינָה הַיְלָדָה

Then **the king's** **countenance** **was changed** **and his thoughts** **troubled**

H116 H4430 H2122 H8133 H7476 H927

לְדַי אֶלְעָזָר מִשְׁתַּבְעָה הַיְלָדָה וְאֶלְעָזָר הַיְלָדָה וְאֶלְעָזָר

him so that the joints **of his loins** **were loosed** **and his knees** **against another**

H7001 H2783 H8271 H755 H1668

לְדַי אֶלְעָזָר :

against another **smote**

H1668 H5368

Additional Cross-References

Nahum 2:10 (Parallel theme): She is empty, and void, and waste: and the heart melteth, and the knees smite together, and much pain is in all loins, and the faces of them all gather blackness.

Ezekiel 7:17 (Parallel theme): All hands shall be feeble, and all knees shall be weak as water.

Daniel 7:28 (Parallel theme): Hitherto is the end of the matter. As for me Daniel, my cogitations much troubled me, and my countenance changed in me: but I kept the matter in my heart.

Psalms 69:23 (Parallel theme): Let their eyes be darkened, that they see not; and make their loins continually to shake.

Ezekiel 21:7 (Parallel theme): And it shall be, when they say unto thee, Wherefore sighest thou? that thou shalt answer, For the tidings; because it cometh: and every heart shall melt, and all hands shall be feeble, and every spirit shall faint, and all knees shall be weak as water: behold, it cometh, and shall be brought to pass, saith the Lord GOD.

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.

Daniel 4:19 (Kingdom): Then Daniel, whose name was Belteshazzar, was astonished for one hour, and his thoughts troubled him. The king spake, and said, Belteshazzar, let not the dream, or the interpretation thereof, trouble thee. Belteshazzar answered and said, My lord, the dream be to them that hate thee, and the interpretation thereof to thine enemies.
