

# Jeremiah 12:5

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

If thou hast run with the footmen, and they have wearied thee, then how canst thou contend with horses? and if in the land of peace, wherein thou trustedst, they wearied thee, then how wilt thou do in the swelling of Jordan?

## Analysis

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This verse contains God's challenging response: 'If thou hast run with the footmen, and they have wearied thee, then how canst thou contend with horses?' Instead of answering Jeremiah's complaint, God escalates the challenge. If Anathoth's conspiracy exhausted him, how will he handle worse opposition? 'And if in the land of peace, wherein thou trustedst, they wearied thee, then how wilt thou do in the swelling of Jordan?' 'Land of peace' (erets shalom) may mean Anathoth, his hometown; 'swelling of Jordan' (ge'on haYarden) describes the flooded Jordan valley's dangerous jungle where lions lurked (49:19). Present trials are minor compared to coming challenges.

## Historical Context

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The Jordan's 'swelling' refers to annual flooding that created dense thickets harboring lions and other predators (Jeremiah 49:19, 50:44, Zechariah 11:3). This dangerous terrain provided apt metaphor for severe trials. God's response doesn't explain the theodicy problem but prepares Jeremiah for intensified opposition. His ministry would include imprisonment, death threats, and witnessing Jerusalem's destruction.

## Related Passages

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**Hebrews 11:1** — Definition of faith

**Romans 1:17** — The righteous shall live by faith

## Study Questions

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1. How does God's response challenge rather than comfort Jeremiah's complaint?
2. What does the escalating imagery (footmen to horses, peace to Jordan thickets) teach about progressive trials?

## Interlinear Text

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אָיְתָה כִּי תַּלְאֵן וְכִי יָמִינְתָּה  
with the footmen If thou hast run and they have wearied  
H3588 H854 H7273 H7323 H3811 H349

תְּמַתְּבַחַד הָיָת אַתָּה בְּסִוסִים יָמִינְתָּה וְבִאַרְצָה  
thee then how canst thou contend with horses and if in the land of peace  
H8474 H854 H5483 H776 H7965

אָיְתָה בְּזַעַפְתָּה אַתָּה תְּמַעַשׂ הָיָת  
wherein thou trustedst they wearied thee then how wilt thou do  
H859 H982 H349 H6213

בְּגִדְעֹן בְּגִדְעֹן  
in the swelling of Jordan  
H1347 H3383

## Additional Cross-References

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**1 Peter 4:12** (Parallel theme): Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you:

**Proverbs 24:10** (Parallel theme): If thou faint in the day of adversity, thy strength is small.

**Psalms 42:7** (Parallel theme): Deep calleth unto deep at the noise of thy waterspouts: all thy waves and thy billows are gone over me.

**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?

**Jeremiah 49:19** (Parallel theme): Behold, he shall come up like a lion from the swelling of Jordan against the habitation of the strong: but I will suddenly make him 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?

**Proverbs 3:11** (Parallel theme): My son, despise not the chastening of the LORD; neither be weary of his correction:

**Joshua 3:15** (Parallel theme): And as they that bare the ark were come unto Jordan, and the feet of the priests that bare the ark were dipped in the brim of the water, (for Jordan overfloweth all his banks all the time of harvest,)

**Jeremiah 36:26** (Parallel theme): But the king commanded Jerahmeel the son of Hammelech, and Seraiah the son of Azriel, and Shelemiah the son of Abdeel, to take Baruch the scribe and Jeremiah the prophet: but the LORD hid them.

**Jeremiah 26:8** (Parallel theme): Now it came to pass, when Jeremiah had made an end of speaking all that the LORD had commanded him to speak unto all the people, that the priests and the prophets and all the people took him, saying, Thou shalt surely die.