

Jeremiah 22:23

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

O inhabitant of Lebanon, that makest thy nest in the cedars,
how gracious shalt thou be when pangs come upon thee, the
pain as of a woman in travail!

Analysis

O inhabitant of Lebanon, that makest thy nest in the cedars—Jerusalem's elite inhabited palaces built with Lebanon's famous cedars, symbols of luxury and security. The verb קָנַן (qanan, 'to nest') suggests birds building high, unreachable homes—an image of false safety. But **how gracious shalt thou be when pangs come upon thee, the pain as of a woman in travail!** The Hebrew חֵיל (chil, 'writhing/anguish') describes labor pains—sudden, inescapable, increasing in intensity. The rhetorical question drips with sarcasm: when agony strikes, your luxury will not save you.

The cedar-nest image recalls Isaiah's earlier warning against pride (Isaiah 2:13) and anticipates Jesus's teaching that those who build on sand will fall catastrophically (Matthew 7:26-27). Material security creates an illusion shattered only by crisis. The birth-pang metaphor, used throughout Scripture for divine judgment (1 Thessalonians 5:3), emphasizes the sudden, inevitable nature of God's visitation. No amount of architectural grandeur can withstand His wrath.

Historical Context

King Jehoiakim notoriously built a lavish palace using cedar from Lebanon and forced labor, refusing to pay wages (Jeremiah 22:13-14). The elite class constructed similar luxury dwellings while the poor suffered. Archaeological excavations of Iron Age Jerusalem reveal impressive houses with cedar beams and

ivory inlays, confirming the prophetic critique of ostentatious wealth amid injustice.

Related Passages

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Study Questions

1. What 'cedar palaces' (material securities, status symbols) are you nesting in?
2. How might sudden crisis expose the inadequacy of your earthly refuges?
3. What does it mean to build on the Rock rather than nesting in cedars?

Interlinear Text

יֹשֶׁבֶת י	בְּלִבָּנוֹן	מְקֻנֵּי נָתַי	בְּאַרְזֵי ים	מֶה	יְחִנֵּת
O inhabitant	of Lebanon	that makest thy nest	in the cedars	H4100	how gracious
H3427	H3844	H7077	H730		H2603
בָּא	לָּהּ	חֶבֶל ים	חַיִּל	כִּילָדָה:	
come	H0	shalt thou be when pangs	upon thee the pain	as of a woman in travail	
H935		H2256	H2427	H3205	

Additional Cross-References

Jeremiah 6:24 (Parallel theme): We have heard the fame thereof: our hands wax feeble: anguish hath taken hold of us, and pain, as of a woman in travail.

Jeremiah 22:6 (Parallel theme): For thus saith the LORD unto the king's house of Judah; Thou art Gilead unto me, and the head of Lebanon: yet surely I will make thee a wilderness, and cities which are not inhabited.