

Jeremiah 46:20

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Egypt is like a very fair heifer, but destruction cometh; it cometh out of the north.

Analysis

Egypt is like a very fair heifer (עֲגָלָה יְפָה־פָּה מָצָרִים)—The Hebrew eglah yafah-fiyah portrays Egypt as a beautiful, well-fed young cow, pampered and proud. Yet **destruction cometh; it cometh out of the north** (קָרֵץ מָצָפָן בָּא בָּא) —the doubled ba ba (it cometh, it cometh) intensifies the certainty and imminence of Babylon's approach.

The heifer metaphor evokes Egypt's agricultural wealth and the sacred Apis bull cult at Memphis. But beauty and prosperity provide no defense against divine judgment. The phrase querets (destruction) literally means a biting insect or gadfly —ironic given Egypt's previous plague of flies (Exodus 8:21-24). Now judgment comes not from above but from Mesopotamia.

Historical Context

Egypt's economy centered on Nile agriculture, making the heifer a fitting symbol of prosperity. The Apis bull was worshiped at Memphis as the incarnation of Ptah. The "north" refers to Babylon, which approached Canaan and Egypt from the north despite being east of both regions.

Related Passages

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Study Questions

1. How can external beauty and prosperity blind us to internal spiritual vulnerability?
2. Why does God often use the very symbols of a culture's pride (like Egypt's sacred bulls) in pronouncing judgment?
3. What does the certainty of "it cometh, it cometh" teach about the unstoppable nature of divine justice?

Interlinear Text

בָּאֵ	מֵאָגֵ	וְיַ	עַתְלֵ	הַ	יִפְהָ	גַּיְהָ	מִצְרַיִם	לְזִ	לְזִ	מִצְרַיִם	בָּאֵ
cometh	H935										
heifer	H5697	is like a very fair	H3304	Egypt	H4714	but destruction	H7171	of the north	H6828	cometh	H935

בָּאֵ

cometh

H935

Additional Cross-References

Jeremiah 47:2 (Parallel theme): Thus saith the LORD; Behold, waters rise up out of the north, and shall be an overflowing flood, and shall overflow the land, and all that is therein; the city, and them that dwell therein: then the men shall cry, and all the inhabitants of the land shall howl.

Hosea 10:11 (Parallel theme): And Ephraim is as an heifer that is taught, and loveth to tread out the corn; but I passed over upon her fair neck: I will make Ephraim to ride; Judah shall plow, and Jacob shall break his clods.

Jeremiah 1:14 (Parallel theme): Then the LORD said unto me, Out of the north an evil shall break forth upon all the inhabitants of the land.

Jeremiah 46:10 (Parallel theme): For this is the day of the Lord GOD of hosts, a day of vengeance, that he may avenge him of his adversaries: and the sword shall devour, and it shall be satiate and made drunk with their blood: for the Lord GOD of hosts hath a sacrifice in the north country by the river Euphrates.

Jeremiah 46:6 (Parallel theme): Let not the swift flee away, nor the mighty man escape; they shall stumble, and fall toward the north by the river Euphrates.

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