

Jeremiah 48:40

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

For thus saith the LORD; Behold, he shall fly as an eagle, and shall spread his wings over Moab.

Analysis

He shall fly as an eagle, and shall spread his wings over Moab—God employs the imagery of a raptor (nesher, נֶשֶׁר, eagle or vulture) to depict Babylon's swift, unstoppable attack on Moab. The verb da'ah (דָּאַה), 'fly,' conveys swooping speed and predatory intent. **Spread his wings** (paras kenaphayv, פָּרָשׁ כְּנָפָי) suggests both the eagle's hunting posture and complete domination—the shadow of those wings offers no protection, only terror.

This eagle is identified in context as Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon (cf. Jeremiah 48:40-47, fulfilled c. 582 BC when Nebuchadnezzar invaded Moab). Ezekiel uses identical imagery for Babylon's king (Ezekiel 17:3). The eagle motif recurs throughout Scripture: Deuteronomy 28:49 warned covenant-breakers that God would bring 'a nation from afar, as swift as the eagle'; Daniel 7:4 depicts Babylon as a winged lion. The irony is profound—Moab mocked Israel's God and exulted in Judah's fall (Jeremiah 48:26-27), yet now faces the same divine instrument of judgment.

Historical Context

Moab, descended from Lot (Genesis 19:37), occupied the plateau east of the Dead Sea. Though distant cousins to Israel, Moabites were historic antagonists (Numbers 22-25, Judges 3:12-30). By Jeremiah's time (early 6th century BC), Moab had survived Assyrian invasions and temporarily prospered while Judah suffered. Archaeological evidence shows Moabite towns flourished until Nebuchadnezzar's

campaigns. Babylonian records confirm Nebuchadnezzar invaded Transjordan around 582 BC, devastating Moab, Ammon, and Edom. The eagle imagery would have terrified Moabites—they had watched Babylon destroy Jerusalem (586 BC) and knew resistance was futile.

Related Passages

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Study Questions

1. How does God's use of pagan Babylon as His instrument of judgment challenge our assumptions about how He works in history?
2. What does Moab's fate teach about the danger of gloating over others' misfortunes, especially God's people?
3. How should the certainty of God's prophesied judgments affect our view of contemporary world events?

Interlinear Text

וְיַדְעָה	כְּשֶׂר	יְהִי	הַבָּה	אָמֵר	כִּי	כִּי
H3588	H3541	For thus saith	the LORD	H2009	as an eagle	Behold he shall fly
		H559	H3068		H5404	H1675
וְיַדְעָה	כְּשֶׂר	יְהִי	הַבָּה	אָמֵר	כִּי	כִּי
and shall spread	his wings	over Moab				
H6566	H3671	H413	H4124			

Additional Cross-References

Isaiah 8:8 (Parallel theme): And he shall pass through Judah; he shall overflow and go over, he shall reach even to the neck; and the stretching out of his wings shall fill the breadth of thy land, O Immanuel.

Deuteronomy 28:49 (References Lord): The LORD shall bring a nation against thee from far, from the end of the earth, as swift as the eagle flieth; a nation whose tongue thou shalt not understand;

Jeremiah 49:22 (Parallel theme): Behold, he shall come up and fly as the eagle, and spread his wings over Bozrah: and at that day shall the heart of the mighty men of Edom be as the heart of a woman in her pangs.

Ezekiel 17:3 (References Lord): And say, Thus saith the Lord GOD; A great eagle with great wings, longwinged, full of feathers, which had divers colours, came unto Lebanon, and took the highest branch of the cedar:

Hosea 8:1 (References Lord): Set the trumpet to thy mouth. He shall come as an eagle against the house of the LORD, because they have transgressed my covenant, and trespassed against my law.

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