

# Jeremiah 48:41

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Kerioth is taken, and the strong holds are surprised, and the mighty men's hearts in Moab at that day shall be as the heart of a woman in her pangs.

## Analysis

**Kerioth is taken, and the strong holds are surprised**—Kerioth (קְרִיּוֹת, possibly plural 'the cities' or a specific fortress-city) represents Moab's defensive strength, now captured (lakad, לָקַד, seized, conquered). The strongholds (metsadot, מְצָדוֹת, are 'surprised' (nitpasah, נִתְפָּסָה, seized suddenly, caught unawares), indicating Moab's defenses crumbled faster than expected despite their confidence.

**The mighty men's hearts... shall be as the heart of a woman in her pangs**—this simile strips away masculine warrior bravado. The Hebrew gibborim (גִּבּוֹרִים, mighty warriors) are reduced to the terror of a woman in labor (metsarah, מְצָרָה, distress, anguish). This isn't denigrating women but recognizing childbirth pangs as the ultimate image of inescapable agony. Isaiah uses identical imagery for Babylon's warriors (Isaiah 13:8). The point is theological: human strength evaporates before divine judgment. Paul later uses birth pangs to describe the Day of the Lord's sudden onset (1 Thessalonians 5:3).

## Historical Context

Kerioth may be modern Khirbet el-Qaryatein in Jordan, a major Moabite administrative center. The Mesha Stele (c. 840 BC), a Moabite inscription, mentions Kerioth as containing a sanctuary to Chemosh, Moab's national deity. Its capture symbolized not just military defeat but religious humiliation—Chemosh could not protect his own shrine city. The image of terrified warriors facing

inevitable doom reflects ancient Near Eastern warfare's psychological dimension. Once a city's walls were breached and strongholds taken, resistance collapsed as soldiers fled or surrendered. Moabite confidence in their fortifications proved illusory against Babylon's siege technology and ruthless efficiency.

## Related Passages

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**John 3:16** — God's love and salvation

**Romans 10:9** — Confession and belief for salvation

**1 John 4:8** — God is love

**John 15:13** — Greatest form of love

## Study Questions

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1. Why does Scripture repeatedly use the image of labor pains to describe inescapable judgment?
2. How does the collapse of Moab's 'strongholds' illustrate the futility of trusting anything other than God for security?
3. In what ways might we be trusting in false 'strongholds' (wealth, status, military power) rather than God?

## Interlinear Text

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|                      |             |                      |               |           |            |
|----------------------|-------------|----------------------|---------------|-----------|------------|
| נִלְכָּדָה           | הַקָּרִי וְ | וְהַמָּצֹד וְ        | נִתְפָּשָׁה   | וְ, הָיָה | כָּל ב     |
| is taken             | Kerioth     | and the strong holds | are surprised | H1961     | hearts     |
| H3920                | H7152       | H4679                | H8610         |           | H3820      |
| גְּבוּרֵי י          | מוֹאָב      | בַּיּוֹם             | הָהוּא        | כָּל ב    | אִשָּׁה    |
| and the mighty men's | in Moab     | at that day          | H1931         | hearts    | of a woman |
| H1368                | H4124       | H3117                |               | H3820     | H802       |
| מִצָּרָה:            |             |                      |               |           |            |
| in her pangs         |             |                      |               |           |            |
| H6887                |             |                      |               |           |            |

## Additional Cross-References

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**Isaiah 13:8** (Parallel theme): And they shall be afraid: pangs and sorrows shall take hold of them; they shall be in pain as a woman that travaileth: they shall be amazed one at another; their faces shall be as flames.

**Isaiah 21:3** (Parallel theme): Therefore are my loins filled with pain: pangs have taken hold upon me, as the pangs of a woman that travaileth: I was bowed down at the hearing of it; I was dismayed at the seeing of it.

**Jeremiah 30:6** (Parallel theme): Ask ye now, and see whether a man doth travail with child? wherefore do I see every man with his hands on his loins, as a woman in travail, and all faces are turned into paleness?

**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.

**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.