

Jeremiah 50:43

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

The king of Babylon hath heard the report of them, and his hands waxed feeble: anguish took hold of him, and pangs as of a woman in travail.

Analysis

The king of Babylon hath heard the report of them (שמע מלך-בבל את-שפטם, shama melekh-Bavel et-shim'am)—Belshazzar (or Nabonidus) receives intelligence about the advancing coalition. **And his hands waxed feeble** (וְרָפוּ יָדָיו, v'rafu yadav)—his hands 'became slack,' lost strength. This exact phrase describes demoralized soldiers unable to fight (Jeremiah 6:24, Ezekiel 7:17). Psychological defeat precedes military defeat.

Anguish took hold of him, and pangs as of a woman in travail (אָבָה הַחִזְקָתָהוּ, tsarah hecheziqathu chil kayyoledah)—The birth-pangs metaphor again (see 49:24). Jeremiah uses it repeatedly for inescapable, all-consuming terror. Daniel 5 dramatically depicts Belshazzar's panic: the handwriting on the wall, knees knocking together (Daniel 5:5-6). That very night Babylon fell (539 BC). The prophecy specified not just military defeat but rulers' personal terror—fulfilled to the detail. God's word is surgically precise.

Historical Context

Belshazzar hosted a feast even as Cyrus's forces approached (Daniel 5:1). His bravado masked fear—the very fear Jeremiah prophesied. When the handwriting appeared, his terror became visible (Daniel 5:6). That night, Medo-Persian soldiers entered via the river channel, killed Belshazzar, and Darius took the kingdom (Daniel 5:30-31).

Related Passages

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Psalm 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Study Questions

1. Why does God detail the psychological terror of judged rulers—what purpose does this serve?
2. How does the fulfillment of specific details (hands weakened, birth pangs) validate prophetic inspiration?
3. What does Belshazzar's false confidence before sudden terror teach about presumption in face of warnings?

Interlinear Text

וְשָׁמַע עַמּוֹן מֶלֶךְ בָּבֶל אָתָה בְּלִבְנֵי יִצְחָק שָׁמַע וְ

hath heard **The king** **of Babylon** **H853** **the report** **waxed feeble**
H8085 H4428 H894 H8088 H7503

וְלֹא תִּלְכְּדָה אַתָּה בְּבָבֶל תִּחְבֹּא אַתָּה בְּבָבֶל
of them and his hands **anguish** **took hold** **of him and pangs**
H3027 H6869 H2388 H2427

כַּאֲלֵהָ
as of a woman in travail
H3205

Additional Cross-References

Jeremiah 51:31 (Kingdom): One post shall run to meet another, and one messenger to meet another, to shew the king of Babylon that his city is taken at one end,

Jeremiah 49:24 (Parallel theme): Damascus is waxed feeble, and turneth herself to flee, and fear hath seized on her: anguish and sorrows have taken her, as a woman in travail.

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