

# 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** (שָׁמַע מֶלֶךְ-בָּבֶל אֶת-שִׁמְעָם) shama melek-Bavel et-shim'am)—Belshazzar (or Nabonidus) receives intelligence about the advancing coalition. **And his hands waxed feeble** (וְרַפּוּ 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** (צָרָה הִחְזִיקָתָהּ חֵיל בְּיֹלְדָה, 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

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**Colossians 1:16** — All things created through Christ

**Psalms 19:1** — Heavens declare God's glory

## Study Questions

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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

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שָׁמַע ע	מֶלֶךְ	בָּבֶל ל	אֶת	שְׁמֵעַם	וְכָפַו
<b>hath heard</b>	<b>The king</b>	<b>of Babylon</b>	H853	<b>the report</b>	<b>waxed feeble</b>
H8085	H4428	H894		H8088	H7503
וְיָדוֹ	צָרָה	הִחְזִיק תְּהוֹ	חַיִּל		
<b>of them and his hands</b>	<b>anguish</b>	<b>took hold</b>	<b>of him and pangs</b>		
H3027	H6869	H2388	H2427		
כִּי־לִדָּה:					
<b>as of a woman in travail</b>					
H3205					

## Additional Cross-References

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**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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