

Jeremiah 51:30

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

The mighty men of Babylon have forborn to fight, they have remained in their holds: their might hath failed; they became as women: they have burned her dwellingplaces; her bars are broken.

Analysis

The mighty men of Babylon have forborn to fight, they have remained in their holds: their might hath failed; they became as women: they have burned her dwellingplaces; her bars are broken—This verse describes Babylon's military collapse through vivid imagery. The "mighty men" (gibborim, גִּבּוֹרִים), Babylon's elite warriors, "forborn to fight" (chadelu lehilachem, חָדְלוּ לְהִלָּחֵם)—they ceased fighting, surrendered without battle. This fulfills the earlier prophecy that God would "break in pieces" warriors (v. 20-23).

"They have remained in their holds" describes soldiers retreating to fortifications rather than defending the city. Their paralysis is explained: "their might hath failed" (nashath geburatham, נִשְׁתָּה גְבוּרָתָם)—literally, their strength dried up. The comparison "they became as women" uses ancient Near Eastern military language not to denigrate women but to describe warriors becoming unable to fight—losing masculine warrior identity. Nahum 3:13 uses identical language for Nineveh's defenders.

The burning of dwellingplaces and breaking of bars (beriach, בְּרִיחַ, gate bars) indicates comprehensive conquest. Gate bars symbolized a city's security (1 Kings 4:13; Psalm 147:13); their breaking meant total vulnerability. This connects to Jeremiah 50:36: "A sword is upon her mighty men; and they shall be dismayed."

Historical Context

Ancient sources (Herodotus, Xenophon) describe Babylon's unusual conquest: the city was so large that when Persian forces entered through the riverbed (after diverting the Euphrates), fighting occurred in outer districts while the inner city remained unaware until runners brought news—exactly fulfilling verse 31. The Babylonian Chronicle confirms minimal military resistance.

Nabonidus, Babylon's last king, had been absent from the city for years, living in Tema (Arabia), leaving his son Belshazzar in charge. This leadership vacuum contributed to poor military morale. Daniel 5 describes the feast during which Babylon fell—soldiers feasting rather than fighting. The prophecy that warriors would remain in their holds rather than fight was precisely fulfilled. Cyrus's policy of bloodless conquest (confirmed by the Cyrus Cylinder) meant Babylon's gates and bars were broken but the city wasn't destroyed by fire initially—though later rebellions led to burning.

Related Passages

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Study Questions

1. What causes divinely appointed defeat where mighty warriors refuse to fight despite superior numbers?
2. How does Babylon's internal collapse (failed courage) before external conquest illustrate spiritual principles?
3. What parallels exist between ancient Babylon's military paralysis and modern institutions that collapse from within?

Interlinear Text

קָדְלוּ	גִּבּוֹרֵי י	בָּבֶל	לְהִלָּחֵם	יָשְׁבוּ
have forborn	The mighty men	of Babylon	to fight	they have remained
H2308	H1368	H894	H3898	H3427
בְּמִצָּד וְ	נָשָׁתָהּ	גִּבּוֹרֹתָם	הִיא וְ	לְנָשִׁים
in their holds	hath failed	their might	H1961	they became as women
H4679	H5405	H1369		H802
הֵצִיטוּ	מִשְׁכְּנֹתֶיהָ	נִשְׁבְּרוּ וְ	בְּרִיחֶיהָ:	
they have burned	her dwellingplaces	are broken	her bars	
H3341	H4908	H7665	H1280	

Additional Cross-References

Nahum 3:13 (Parallel theme): Behold, thy people in the midst of thee are women: the gates of thy land shall be set wide open unto thine enemies: the fire shall devour thy bars.

Isaiah 19:16 (Parallel theme): In that day shall Egypt be like unto women: and it shall be afraid and fear because of the shaking of the hand of the LORD of hosts, which he shaketh over it.

Lamentations 2:9 (Parallel theme): Her gates are sunk into the ground; he hath destroyed and broken her bars: her king and her princes are among the Gentiles: the law is no more; her prophets also find no vision from the LORD.

Psalms 76:5 (Parallel theme): The stouthearted are spoiled, they have slept their sleep: and none of the men of might have found their hands.

Jeremiah 48:41 (Parallel theme): 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.

Amos 1:5 (Parallel theme): I will break also the bar of Damascus, and cut off the inhabitant from the plain of Aven, and him that holdeth the sceptre from the house of Eden: and the people of Syria shall go into captivity unto Kir, saith the LORD.

