

Jeremiah 51:46

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And lest your heart faint, and ye fear for the rumour that shall be heard in the land; a rumour shall both come one year, and after that in another year shall come a rumour, and violence in the land, ruler against ruler.

Analysis

And lest your heart faint, and ye fear for the rumour that shall be heard in the land; a rumour shall both come one year, and after that in another year shall come a rumour, and violence in the land, ruler against ruler. This verse addresses Jewish exiles in Babylon who might become anxious about geopolitical instability surrounding Babylon's fall. Lest your heart faint translates *pen-yirakh levavkem* (פֶּן־יִרַחַ לִבְבְּכֶם), literally "lest your heart become soft/weak." The warning concerns **rumours** (*shemu'ah*, שְׁמוּעָה)—reports of conflict, conspiracy, and political upheaval.

The prophecy predicts successive waves of alarming news: **a rumour shall both come one year, and after that in another year**—indicating prolonged instability before Babylon's final fall. This historical detail demonstrates prophetic precision: the period 553-539 BC saw increasing Persian pressure on Babylon, internal power struggles, and shifting alliances. **Ruler against ruler** likely refers to conflicts between Nabonidus (Babylon's last king) and his son Belshazzar (co-regent), plus external threats from Cyrus. God warns His people not to panic during these tumultuous times because He orchestrates these events for their ultimate deliverance. This principle appears throughout Scripture: believers should not fear world chaos because God remains sovereign (Psalm 46:1-3, Matthew 24:6).

Historical Context

The years leading to Babylon's fall were marked by political intrigue. Nabonidus (r. 556-539 BC) was an unpopular king who spent years away from Babylon pursuing religious interests in Tema (Arabia), leaving his son Belshazzar as co-regent. This created tension and instability. Meanwhile, Cyrus of Persia was rapidly conquering neighboring territories. For Jewish exiles, this upheaval was both terrifying (their host nation crumbling) and hopeful (potential liberation). Jeremiah's prophecy prepared them psychologically and spiritually: these "rumours" were signs of God's judgment unfolding, not random chaos to fear. Daniel lived through this period, interpreting the handwriting on the wall the night Babylon fell (Daniel 5). The Jewish community needed faith to trust God's purposes amid instability rather than either assimilating into Babylonian culture or despairing of deliverance.

Related Passages

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Study Questions

1. How should believers today respond to alarming geopolitical "rumours" and instability in light of God's sovereignty?
2. What does this verse teach about God's pastoral care for His people's emotional and spiritual well-being during turbulent times?
3. How can we distinguish between appropriate concern for world events and the fear and anxiety God warns against?

Interlinear Text

וְפָן	יִבֶּן	לְבַבְכֶּם	וְתִירָא וְ	הַשְׁמוּעַ הַ	הַנִּשְׁמָ עַת
H6435	faint	And lest your heart	and ye fear	a rumour	that shall be heard
H7401		H3824	H3372	H8052	H8085
בְּאֶרֶץ	וְכֹל	בְּשָׁנָה	הַשְׁמוּעַ הַ	וְאַחֲרָיו	בְּשָׁנָה
in the land	shall both come	one year	a rumour	and after	one year
H776	H935	H8141	H8052	H310	H8141
הַשְׁמוּעַ הַ	וְחַמַּס	בְּאֶרֶץ	מִשָּׁל:	עַל	מִשָּׁל:
a rumour	and violence	in the land	against ruler	H5921	against ruler
H8052	H2555	H776	H4910		H4910

Additional Cross-References

Isaiah 19:2 (Parallel theme): And I will set the Egyptians against the Egyptians: and they shall fight every one against his brother, and every one against his neighbour; city against city, and kingdom against kingdom.

2 Kings 19:7 (Parallel theme): Behold, I will send a blast upon him, and he shall hear a rumour, and shall return to his own land; and I will cause him to fall by the sword in his own land.