

Jeremiah 51:49

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

As Babylon hath caused the slain of Israel to fall, so at Babylon shall fall the slain of all the earth.

Analysis

As Babylon hath caused the slain of Israel to fall, so at Babylon shall fall the slain of all the earth. This verse articulates the lex talionis (law of retribution) principle governing Babylon's judgment: **As Babylon hath caused... so at Babylon shall fall.** The Hebrew construction emphasizes direct correspondence between crime and punishment. Slain (chalalim, חַלְלִים) refers to those killed in battle or violence—Babylon's military campaigns killed countless people from many nations.

The slain of Israel specifically refers to those killed during Jerusalem's destruction (586 BC) when Babylon slaughtered civilians, soldiers, and priests (2 Kings 25:7, 18-21, Lamentations 2:21). The phrase **the slain of all the earth** (chalalei kol-ha'arets, צָלָלֵי כָּל-הָאָרֶץ) expands the scope—Babylon destroyed numerous nations (Assyria, Egypt, Elam, and many others). Now all these deaths are avenged: **at Babylon shall fall the slain**, meaning within Babylon's territory, judgment comes. This demonstrates God's justice: He holds nations accountable for bloodshed (Genesis 9:5-6, Revelation 18:24). The principle applies eschatologically—Revelation's "Babylon" will answer for "all the prophets and saints, and all that were slain upon the earth" (Revelation 18:24).

Historical Context

Babylon's Neo-Babylonian Empire (626-539 BC) built power through brutal military campaigns. Nebuchadnezzar II (r. 605-562 BC) destroyed Jerusalem (586

BC), killing thousands and deporting survivors. Earlier campaigns devastated Egypt (605 BC), Tyre (585-572 BC siege), and numerous smaller nations. Ancient warfare was notoriously cruel—mass executions, forced deportations, and psychological terror were standard practices. The Babylonian Chronicles document these conquests matter-of-factly, showing the empire's pride in military domination. When Cyrus conquered Babylon (539 BC), the death toll was relatively light compared to Babylon's own campaigns, yet the empire's political death was total. The prophecy's fulfillment demonstrates that God's justice, though sometimes delayed, is certain. Every life taken unjustly is remembered by God and will be accounted for—a sobering truth for all nations and individuals.

Related Passages

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Study Questions

1. How does this principle of reciprocal justice ("as Babylon did, so shall be done to Babylon") reflect God's character?
2. What does God's remembrance of 'all the slain of the earth' teach about the value of human life and accountability for violence?
3. How should this prophecy's fulfillment shape our confidence in God's future judgment of evil and vindication of the oppressed?

Interlinear Text

לְבָבָּךְ	לְבָבָּךְ	גַם	וְיִשְׂרָאֵל	לְבָבָּךְ	לְבָבָּךְ	גַם
As	Babylon	shall fall	hath caused the slain	of Israel	As	Babylon
H1571	H894	H5307	H2491	H3478	H1571	H894
1	תַּפְלֵל	וְיִשְׂרָאֵל	כָּל	כָּל	כָּל	כָּל
shall fall	hath caused the slain	of all the earth				
H5307	H2491	H3605		H776		

Additional Cross-References

Jeremiah 50:29 (References Israel): Call together the archers against Babylon: all ye that bend the bow, camp against it round about; let none thereof escape: recompense her according to her work; according to all that she hath done, do unto her: for she hath been proud against the LORD, against the Holy One of Israel.

Jeremiah 51:24 (References Babylon): And I will render unto Babylon and to all the inhabitants of Chaldea all their evil that they have done in Zion in your sight, saith the LORD.

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