

Jeremiah 52:4

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And it came to pass in the ninth year of his reign, in the tenth month, in the tenth day of the month, that Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon came, he and all his army, against Jerusalem, and pitched against it, and built forts against it round about.

Analysis

And it came to pass in the ninth year of his reign, in the tenth month, in the tenth day of the month, that Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon came, he and all his army, against Jerusalem, and pitched against it, and built forts against it round about. This verse provides precise chronological detail for Jerusalem's final siege—the **ninth year of his reign** (Zedekiah's), **tenth month, tenth day** corresponds to January 15, 588 BC by modern reckoning. Such precision emphasizes the historicity of this catastrophic event. The date became a perpetual fast day in Jewish observance (Zechariah 8:19), commemorating when Babylon's noose began tightening around Jerusalem.

Nebuchadrezzar (an alternate spelling of Nebuchadnezzar) came with **all his army**, indicating overwhelming force. They **pitched against it** (chanu, חָנּוּ, meaning to encamp) and **built forts** (dayeq, יָבֵּן, siege works/ramparts) **round about**, completely encircling Jerusalem to prevent escape or resupply. Ancient siege warfare involved constructing earthworks, siege towers, battering rams, and perimeter walls to starve the city into submission. This siege lasted approximately 30 months (until 586 BC), causing terrible famine described in Lamentations (Lamentations 4:9-10). The siege fulfilled Deuteronomy 28:52-57's covenant curses for disobedience.

Historical Context

Nebuchadnezzar's siege of Jerusalem (588-586 BC) was his response to Zedekiah's rebellion. After Egypt encouraged Zedekiah to revolt (Jeremiah 37:5-7), Nebuchadnezzar marched his army from Babylon to crush the rebellion. Archaeological evidence from the Lachish Letters (ostraca found at Tel Lachish) provides contemporary documentation of Babylonian forces systematically conquering Judean fortresses before focusing on Jerusalem. The siege was temporarily lifted when an Egyptian relief force approached (Jeremiah 37:5), giving false hope, but the Babylonians returned to complete the siege. The famine conditions became so severe that mothers reportedly ate their own children (Lamentations 2:20, 4:10). The Babylonian siege techniques were ruthlessly effective—archaeological excavations show evidence of massive destruction layers from this period at multiple Judean sites. The tenth of Tevet remains a Jewish fast day commemorating the siege's beginning.

Related Passages

1 John 4:8 — God is love

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

Study Questions

1. How does the precise historical documentation of Jerusalem's siege strengthen confidence in Scripture's reliability?
2. What does the nearly 30-month siege's horror teach about the serious consequences of covenant unfaithfulness?
3. How should we understand the relationship between human military action (Nebuchadnezzar's siege) and divine judgment in this event?

Interlinear Text

וַיְהִי	בְּשָׁנָה ה'	הַתְּשַׁעִּית	לְמַלְכוֹ	לַחֹדֶשׁ	
H1961	year	And it came to pass in the ninth	of his reign	day of the month	
	H8141	H8671	H4427	H2320	
מֶלֶךְ	נְבוּכַדְרֶצַּר	בָּא	לַחֹדֶשׁ	בְּעָשׂוֹר	בְּעָשְׂרִי
king	that Nebuchadrezzar	came	day of the month	in the tenth	in the tenth
H4428	H5019	H935	H2320	H6218	H6224
וַיִּחַן	יְרוּשָׁלַם	עַל	חֵילוֹ	וְכָל הָוָא	בְּבָבֶל
and pitched	against Jerusalem	H5921	he and all his army	H1931	of Babylon
H2583	H3389		H2428	H3605	H894
סָבִיב:	דָּוָק	עַל יְהוּדָה	וַיִּבְנֶה	עַל יְהוּדָה	
against it round about	forts	H5921	against it and built	H5921	
H5439	H1785		H1129		

Additional Cross-References

Jeremiah 39:1 (Kingdom): In the ninth year of Zedekiah king of Judah, in the tenth month, came Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon and all his army against Jerusalem, and they besieged it.

Zechariah 8:19 (Parallel theme): Thus saith the LORD of hosts; The fast of the fourth month, and the fast of the fifth, and the fast of the seventh, and the fast of the tenth, shall be to the house of Judah joy and gladness, and cheerful feasts; therefore love the truth and peace.

Jeremiah 32:24 (Parallel theme): Behold the mounts, they are come unto the city to take it; and the city is given into the hand of the Chaldeans, that fight against it, because of the sword, and of the famine, and of the pestilence: and what thou hast spoken is come to pass; and, behold, thou seest it.

Jeremiah 52:7 (Kingdom): Then the city was broken up, and all the men of war fled, and went forth out of the city by night by the way of the gate between the two walls, which was by the king's garden; (now the Chaldeans were by the city round about:) and they went by the way of the plain.

