

Micah 4:9

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Now why dost thou cry out aloud? is there no king in thee? is thy counsellor perished? for pangs have taken thee as a woman in travail.

Analysis

Now why dost thou cry out aloud? is there no king in thee? is thy counsellor perished? עַפְתָּה לְפָתָה מְרִיעָה רַע פָּמָלָה אַיִן בָּה אַמְּיוֹצָה אָבָד (attah lammah tari'i rea hamelekh ein bakh im-yo'atsekh avad). The prophet shifts from glorious future (v. 1-8) to present crisis. רַע (rua, cry out/wail) indicates alarm and anguish. The rhetorical questions probe: where is your מלך (melekh, king)? Where is your יְעֵץ (yo'ets, counselor/advisor)? The implication: human leadership has failed; panic ensues.

For pangs have taken thee as a woman in travail (פִּיחָזֵק בָּה חִיל פַּיְלָדָה) ki-chazaq bakh chil kayyoledah). חיל (chil, pain/writhing/labor pains) describes intense suffering. The simile פַּיְלָדָה (kayyoledah, like one giving birth) is common for extreme anguish (Isaiah 13:8, 21:3; Jeremiah 4:31, 6:24). Yet childbirth imagery carries dual meaning: pain produces new life. Israel's agony isn't merely destruction but labor producing something new—purified remnant, messianic kingdom.

The questions expose misplaced trust. Israel looked to human kings and counselors for security rather than Yahweh their true King (1 Samuel 8:7). When crisis came, earthly rulers proved inadequate. Jeremiah 17:5-8 warns: "**Cursed be the man that trusteth in man... Blessed is the man that trusteth in the LORD.**" Yet God uses even leadership failure to drive His people to Himself. The labor pains produce redemptive outcome—exile purifies the remnant, preparing

for Messiah's advent. Romans 8:22 extends this imagery: "**The whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now**"—awaiting redemption's consummation.

Historical Context

This verse likely addresses Babylonian siege of Jerusalem (588-586 BC). King Zedekiah proved weak and vacillating, ignoring Jeremiah's counsel and rebelling against Babylon (2 Kings 24:20-25:7). When Babylon besieged Jerusalem, causing famine and death (Lamentations 4:9-10), Zedekiah's leadership collapsed. He attempted escape, was captured, saw his sons executed, was blinded, and exiled (2 Kings 25:4-7). The counselors similarly failed—false prophets promised deliverance (Jeremiah 28) while Babylon destroyed the city.

The labor-pain imagery appears throughout Scripture for covenant crises. Isaiah used it for Babylon's judgment (Isaiah 13:8), Jeremiah for Jerusalem's fall (Jeremiah 4:31), and Jesus for end-times tribulation (Matthew 24:8—"the beginning of sorrows" translates ὡδίνων, odinon, birth pangs). Paul applies it to creation awaiting redemption (Romans 8:22). The pattern: anguish precedes new creation. Israel's exile-birth-pains produced purified remnant; the church's tribulations birth glorified saints; creation's groan yields new heavens and earth (Revelation 21:1-5).

Related Passages

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Study Questions

1. How do the rhetorical questions about absent king and counselor expose the futility of trusting human leadership instead of God?
2. What does the childbirth imagery teach about redemptive purpose within judgment—that anguish can produce new spiritual life?

3. In what ways should Christians view present sufferings as 'birth pangs' anticipating future glory rather than meaningless tragedy?

Interlinear Text

בְּנֵי אָיוֹן בְּנֵי לְבָנָה עַתָּה תְּרִיעַ יְעִי
H6258 H4100 Now why dost thou cry
H7321 H7452 out aloud
H369 H0 is there no king
H4428

אָמֵן אָמֵן יְמַצֵּךְ אָבֶת הַמִּזְרָחָה
H518 in thee is thy counsellor H3289 perished H6 H3588
H2388 have taken H2427 for pangs

פִּילִדָּה:

thee as a woman in travail
H3205

Additional Cross-References

Jeremiah 8:19 (Kingdom): Behold the voice of the cry of the daughter of my people because of them that dwell in a far country: Is not the LORD in Zion? is not her king in her? Why have they provoked me to anger with their graven images, and with strange vanities?

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