

## 24.04 Handwriting on the Wall; the Fall of Babylon (2 Kings 25:27–30; Jeremiah 52:31–34; Daniel 5:1–31)

✓ “*Check*” it out; opinion, inference, supposed conversation, or fact one can verify follows.

[. . .] Brackets indicate a remark to the teacher that will not be read aloud; they also show answers to questions.

### Visuals and Tools:

- Pictures and other visuals found at the end of this lesson. Check “Activities” and “Handwork” found below for additional materials. Please give credit to the sources of pictures. Likenesses of characters might change with the variety of pictures. Hopefully, this isn’t too confusing to young minds.
- Purple robe and gold chain necklace for children to wear
- (optional) Balances used for weighing

**Bible Time Tips and Terms to Teach:** Vocabulary words are enlarged for flashcards at the end of this lesson. Print on colorful cardstock and cut apart.

- *vessels*: bowls and cups used by the priests in their ministry at the Temple
- *wine*: an alcoholic beverage made from fruit, usually grapes. It can make those who drink it drunk—altered, sometimes to the point of senselessness in mind and body because of the effects of alcohol.
- *blaspheme*: to speak against God in a disrespectful way
- *astrologers, Chaldeans, and soothsayers*: people whom heathen people thought were wise who could interpret mysteries
- *Medes and Persians*: Media was north of Babylon; Persia was southeast. The two nations were united by a king named Cyrus who was to come against Babylon.

### Scripture: (NKJV)

2 Kings 25:27 (and Jeremiah 52:31–34) And in the thirty-seventh year of the exile of Jehoiachin king of Judah, in the twelfth month, on the twenty-seventh day of the month, Evil-merodach king of Babylon, in the year that he began to reign, graciously freed Jehoiachin king of Judah from prison. 28 And he spoke kindly to him and gave him a seat above the seats of the kings who were with him in Babylon. 29 So Jehoiachin put off his prison garments. And every day of his life he dined regularly at the king’s table, 30 and for his allowance, a regular allowance was given him by the king, according to his daily needs, as long as he lived.

Daniel 5:1 King Belshazzar made a great feast for a thousand of his lords and drank wine in front of the thousand. 2 Belshazzar, when he tasted the wine, commanded that the vessels of gold and of silver that Nebuchadnezzar his father had taken out of the temple in Jerusalem be brought, that the king and his lords, his wives, and his concubines might drink from them. 3 Then they brought in the golden vessels that had been taken out of the temple, the house of God in Jerusalem, and the king and his lords, his wives, and his concubines drank from them. 4 They drank wine and praised the gods of gold and silver, bronze, iron, wood, and stone.

5 Immediately the fingers of a human hand appeared and wrote on the plaster of the wall of the king’s palace, opposite the lampstand. And the king saw the hand as it wrote. 6 Then the king’s color changed, and his thoughts alarmed him; his limbs gave way, and his knees knocked together. 7 The king called loudly to bring in the enchanters, the Chaldeans, and the astrologers. The king declared to the wise men of Babylon, “Whoever reads this writing, and shows me its interpretation, shall be clothed with purple and have a chain of gold around his neck and shall be the third ruler in the kingdom.” 8 Then all the king’s wise men came in, but they could not read the writing or make known to the king the interpretation. 9 Then King Belshazzar was greatly alarmed, and his color changed, and his lords were perplexed.

10 The queen, because of the words of the king and his lords, came into the banqueting hall, and the queen declared, “O king, live forever! Let not your thoughts alarm you or your color change. 11 There is a man in your

kingdom in whom is the spirit of the holy gods. In the days of your father, light and understanding and wisdom like the wisdom of the gods were found in him, and King Nebuchadnezzar, your father—your father the king—made him chief of the magicians, enchanters, Chaldeans, and astrologers, 12 because an excellent spirit, knowledge, and understanding to interpret dreams, explain riddles, and solve problems were found in this Daniel, whom the king named Belteshazzar. Now let Daniel be called, and he will show the interpretation.”

13 Then Daniel was brought in before the king. The king answered and said to Daniel, “You are that Daniel, one of the exiles of Judah, whom the king my father brought from Judah. 14 I have heard of you that the spirit of the gods is in you, and that light and understanding and excellent wisdom are found in you. 15 Now the wise men, the enchanters, have been brought in before me to read this writing and make known to me its interpretation, but they could not show the interpretation of the matter. 16 But I have heard that you can give interpretations and solve problems. Now if you can read the writing and make known to me its interpretation, you shall be clothed with purple and have a chain of gold around your neck and shall be the third ruler in the kingdom.”

17 Then Daniel answered and said before the king, “Let your gifts be for yourself, and give your rewards to another. Nevertheless, I will read the writing to the king and make known to him the interpretation. 18 O king, the Most High God gave Nebuchadnezzar your father kingship and greatness and glory and majesty. 19 And because of the greatness that he gave him, all peoples, nations, and languages trembled and feared before him. Whom he would, he killed, and whom he would, he kept alive; whom he would, he raised up, and whom he would, he humbled. 20 But when his heart was lifted up and his spirit was hardened so that he dealt proudly, he was brought down from his kingly throne, and his glory was taken from him. 21 He was driven from among the children of mankind, and his mind was made like that of a beast, and his dwelling was with the wild donkeys. He was fed grass like an ox, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven, until he knew that the Most High God rules the kingdom of mankind and sets over it whom he will. 22 And you his son, Belshazzar, have not humbled your heart, though you knew all this, 23 but you have lifted up yourself against the Lord of heaven. And the vessels of his house have been brought in before you, and you and your lords, your wives, and your concubines have drunk wine from them. And you have praised the gods of silver and gold, of bronze, iron, wood, and stone, which do not see or hear or know, but the God in whose hand is your breath, and whose are all your ways, you have not honored.

24 “Then from his presence the hand was sent, and this writing was inscribed. 25 And this is the writing that was inscribed: Mene, Mene, Tekel, and Parsin. 26 This is the interpretation of the matter: Mene, God has numbered the days of your kingdom and brought it to an end; 27 Tekel, you have been weighed in the balances and found wanting; 28 Peres, your kingdom is divided and given to the Medes and Persians.”

29 Then Belshazzar gave the command, and Daniel was clothed with purple, a chain of gold was put around his neck, and a proclamation was made about him, that he should be the third ruler in the kingdom.

30 That very night Belshazzar the Chaldean king was killed. 31 And Darius the Mede received the kingdom, being about sixty-two years old.

### **Introduction/Review:**

✓ Sixty-seven years had passed since Nebuchadnezzar had first taken captives from Jerusalem. Among those whom he had taken were Daniel and Jehoiachin, who was then king of Israel. King Zedekiah, who didn't listen to Jeremiah when told to surrender, became king of Judah after Jehoiachin was exiled. But he rebelled against Nebuchadnezzar, tried to escape, and was blinded before being hauled off to Babylon. Along with captives, Nebuchadnezzar had taken all the gold and silver cups and bowls and other vessels out of the Temple at Jerusalem and had brought them to Babylon.

### **Story:**

#### ***Jehoiachin's promotion***

✓ About two years after Nebuchadnezzar became normal again after being beast-like, he died, and a new

king ruled Babylon. This king noticed Jehoiachin in prison. For some unknown reason, the king of Babylon spoke kindly to him and promoted him above all the other kings who had been captured. He gave Jehoiachin a throne higher than the other kings' thrones and fed him at his own table for the rest of Jehoiachin's life.

Two more kings had already ruled in Babylon when today's story takes place.

### ***Prophecies of Babylon's destruction***

Isaiah and Jeremiah had both prophesied that Babylon would be destroyed. God had given them very specific prophecies. For example, God said He would destroy Babylon because they had destroyed Jerusalem (Isaiah 13:19; Jeremiah 51:24). God told exactly which nation would come to destroy and that they would do it suddenly (Jeremiah 51:8, 11). God also said Babylon would never again be inhabited (Isaiah 21:9; Jeremiah 51:29). All of these prophecies happened just as God had said, and here's how.

Belshazzar became the king of Babylon.<sup>1</sup> This wicked king cared nothing at all about the one true God of Israel. ✓ Although he had heard the stories about God's protection of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego and about God's prophecy of Nebuchadnezzar's going crazy like a beast and being returned to normal, he disregarded them. As our story begins, he is in his banquet hall, enjoying a great feast with a thousand of his lords.

### ***Drinking from God's vessels***

As the king tastes his wine, ✓ he thinks of a way to enhance his feast and commands, "Bring to me the vessels that Nebuchadnezzar brought from the Temple in Jerusalem so that we—my princes, my wives, and my servant wives—might drink wine from them!" What did Belshazzar want to use for drinking vessels, students? [The vessels from God's Temple.] What do you think God would think about using His holy vessels that drunken way? [Be angry.]

A servant goes to get the vessels of gold and silver and brings them to Belshazzar. The king, his princes, his wives, and his servant wives pour wine into those holy vessels and drink wine from them! How totally disrespectful of the Most High God! But as they drink, the king and all blaspheme God even more by praising their own false gods of gold, silver, bronze, iron, wood, and stone. Oh, I don't think God will let them get by with this, do you?

### ***Writing on the wall***

Have you ever gotten so scared that your hands shook? How about your knees shaking and hitting each other? The thing that happened next scared King Belshazzar so much that "the king's color changed, and his thoughts alarmed him; his limbs gave way, and his knees knocked together."

There he is drinking wine in God's vessels and praising his gods when, suddenly, fingers of a man's hand appear. Those fingers write some words on the wall. [Teacher, write these words on a chalkboard or whiteboard as you say them.] "*Mene, Mene, Tekel, Parsin.*" [Pronounced, "menAY, menAY; TAYkel parSEEN."]

"✓ Ooh! What does this mean?" inquires Belshazzar as his knees knock each other. "Ooh! How frightening! Bring in my astrologers, Chaldeans, and soothsayers!" His astrologers, Chaldeans, and soothsayers come before him, and he announces. "Whoever interprets this writing shall be clothed with purple, shall wear a chain of gold around his neck, and shall be the third ruler<sup>2</sup> in the kingdom."

But when all these wise men look at the message on the wall, for some reason they cannot interpret it, for they cannot even read it!<sup>3</sup> Then Belshazzar is doubly terrified, and his lords are totally confused.

### ***Suggesting that Daniel interpret***

News of the writing and the inability of the wise men to interpret travels throughout the palace. The king's ✓ mother or, more likely, grandmother<sup>4</sup> hears about what is happening and comes into the banquet house.

"O king, live forever," she says. "Don't let your thoughts trouble you. There is a man in your kingdom in

whom is the spirit of the holy gods.<sup>5</sup> In the days of your ✓ grandfather Nebuchadnezzar, he showed light and understanding and wisdom like the wisdom of the gods. Nebuchadnezzar made him the master of the astrologers, Chaldeans, and soothsayers because an excellent spirit, knowledge, interpreting of dreams, and ability to solve problems were found in him. Now let Daniel be called, and he will show the interpretation.”

### ***Appearing before Belshazzar***

✓ Belshazzar is only too glad to call Daniel. When he comes, Belshazzar, still nervous, explains: “Are you that Daniel that my ✓ grandfather brought from Israel? I have heard of you—that light and understanding and excellent wisdom is found in you. Now, the wise men are here so that they could read this writing and make known the interpretation, but they cannot. If you can read the writing and make known to me its interpretation, you shall be clothed in purple and wear a chain of gold around your neck and be third ruler in the kingdom.”

Belshazzar is done talking. Finally, Daniel is able to answer. “Keep your gifts for yourself and give your rewards to someone else. Nevertheless, I will read the writing to you and will make known to the king the interpretation.”

### ***Rebuking Belshazzar***

But before Daniel actually does read and interpret the writing, he takes time to preach a little sermon to the king. This is what he says: “O king. The Most High God gave Nebuchadnezzar, ✓ your grandfather, a kingdom, majesty, glory, and honor. All people, nations, and languages trembled and feared before him. But when his heart was lifted up and his mind hardened in pride, he was taken off his kingly throne, and his glory was taken from him. His heart was made like the beasts’. He lived with wild donkeys. People fed him with grass like oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven until he knew that the Most High God rules in the kingdom of men and that He appoints over it whomever He wishes.

“You, ✓ his grandson, O Belshazzar, even though you knew all of this, have not humbled yourself before God but have lifted yourself up against the Lord of heaven. You have brought God’s vessels before you. You and your lords, your wives, and your servant wives have drunk wine in those vessels and have praised the gods of silver, gold, brass, iron, wood, and stone, which do not see nor hear nor know. You have not glorified the God who gives you breath.”

### ***Interpreting the writing***

“At the very time you drank from God’s vessels, God sent the hand with this writing: ‘MENE, MENE, TEKEL, PARSIN.’ *MENE* means ‘numbered.’ God has numbered the days of your kingdom and finished it. It is done. *TEKEL* means ‘weighed.’ God has weighed you in the balances, and you are lacking. *PARSIN* means ‘divided,’ and the word itself sounds like *Persia*. Your kingdom is divided and given to the Medes and Persians.”

The Bible gives no record of Belshazzar’s answering Daniel except that he said, “Clothe him in purple, put a chain of gold around his neck, and proclaim that he is third ruler in the kingdom.”

God had prophesied that the kingdom to conquer Babylon would be the Medes from the north and that the destruction would be sudden (Jeremiah 51:8). In order to understand just how sudden this capture was, note these words: “That very night.” “That very night” soldiers from the Medes and Persians, who had diverted the Euphrates River so that it did not flow through the city of Babylon, went down through the river gate and up into the city.<sup>6,7</sup> No one stopped them. Upon entering the city, they went to the palace, slew King Belshazzar, and conquered the great city of Babylon.

God had said it; God did it “that very night.”

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<sup>1</sup>Actually, his father, Nabonidus, son of Nebuchadnezzar, was king, but he left Belshazzar in charge while he himself was living elsewhere.

<sup>2</sup>Third ruler: Nabonidus was first; Belshazzar was second; this wise person would be third.

<sup>3</sup>“[I]f they could not do the former [read the words], it must be impossible to do the latter [interpret]; of the reason of which, various are the conjectures: as that, though these words were written in Chaldee [the language of Babylon], yet in characters . . . they did not understand . . . or the words were placed so as to be read backward, or else downward, and not straightforward; or they were all in one word; or only the initial letters of words; but the true reason was, that it was so ordained by the Lord, that they should not be able to read and interpret them; this being reserved for another man, Daniel, that he might have the honour, and God the glory” (John Gill at [Daniel 5:8 - Bible Verse Meaning and Commentary \(biblestudytools.com\)](#)).

<sup>4</sup>Scripture often designates someone as *mother* or *father* who is actually a grandmother or a grandfather.

<sup>5</sup>Could be translated “the holy God.”

<sup>6</sup>“Cyrus, the Great . . . employed a brilliant strategy to divert the Euphrates River during his conquest of Babylon. First, he dug trenches upstream and redirected the water from the Euphrates into a large reservoir. This caused the water level to drop, creating a lowered passage through the riverbed. Under the cover of darkness, Cyrus and his Persian soldiers marched through the knee-deep water in the riverbed and stealthily entered Babylon through the lowered gates” ([How did Cyrus diverted the Euphrates River? - Geographic FAQ Hub: Answers to Your Global Questions \(ncesc.com\)](#)).

<sup>7</sup>For those who, like this author, might be confused about why Darius becomes king when it was Cyrus who conquered Babylon (cf. Daniel 9:1 and 10:1), consider the fact that Medes (Darius) and Persians (Cyrus) were confederate. “Belshazzar is conquered that night by Cyrus the Great w/ Darius the Mede becoming governor/king” ([The Chronology of Daniel | 4 Truth Ministry](#)). Some confusion might come from the fact that the “chronological order of Daniel is chapters 1-4, 7-8, 5-6, and 9-12” ([The Chronology of Daniel | 4 Truth Ministry](#)).

### Lessons from this lesson:

- We see Jesus:  
“Solomon had a wonderful sagacity [wisdom] of this kind; but it should seem that in these things Daniel had more of an immediate divine direction. *Behold, a greater than Solomon himself is here.* Yet what was the wisdom of them both compared with the treasures of wisdom hidden in Christ?” ([Daniel 5 Commentary - Matthew Henry Commentary on the Whole Bible \(Complete\) \(biblestudytools.com\)](#)).
- Once again, pride went before destruction and a haughty spirit before a fall.
- God will do all His holy will.
- Respect sacred things like prayer time in church (stop what you are doing and enter into prayer), the Bible, God’s church body and building (don’t run around in the church building), the presentation of God’s Word (listen).

### Activities:

- Play dough: candlestick; hand; write on a flat piece, “Mene, Mene, Tekel, Parsin”
- Snack: grapes
- Watch a 5.5-minute, well-done cartoon video, “Belshazzar: The Writing on the Wall,” at [Bible Stories for the Young : Stories \(biblestoriesonline.com\)](#). (Click on “Stories” and scroll about halfway down the page.) (The script states Nebuchadnezzar was Belshazzar’s father. Overlook this, or point out footnote #4 above.)
- Print and give out a children’s tract, “The Very Scary Hand,” the Bible story of the handwriting on the wall, with a gospel application found at [veryscary.pub \(ccwtoday.org\)](#).

- Sing “The Hand of God on the Wall,” found below.
- Using a time line, explain to students that as B.C. years (now designated as *BCE*) get closer to the time of Jesus Christ, the numbers decrease. Then do some math, again showing the time line: Subtract 586, the year B.C. Nebuchadnezzar conquered Jerusalem, from 722 B.C., the year the northern kingdom was conquered by Assyria. [Answer: 136 years from the fall of Israel in the north to the fall of Judah in the south.] Then subtract 539 B.C., the year Babylon was conquered by Cyrus, from 586 B.C. to see how many years passed from the fall of Judah to the fall of Babylon. [Answer: 47 years.]
- Review questions: (Game: When a student answers a question correctly, dress him or her in purple, put a chain of gold around his or her neck, and proclaim him or her to be third ruler.)
  1. What eventually happened to King Jechoniah in Babylon? [He was released from prison and ate with the king of Babylon.]
  2. How was King Belshazzar blaspheming God’s name at his banquet? [By using Temple cups to drink wine and by praising his idols with those cups of wine.]
  3. What happened as the thousand lords and ladies were drinking wine from God’s Temple cups? [The fingers of a hand wrote on the wall.]
  4. What were the words written on the wall? [“Mene, Mene, Tekel, Parsin.”]
  5. Fill in the blank: “Mene, Mene” meant Belshazzar’s \_\_\_\_\_ was finished. [Kingdom or life.]
  6. “*Parsin*” in the writing on the wall meant what two peoples would conquer Babylon? [Medes and Persians.]
  7. Who died that night? [Belshazzar, king of Babylon,]

**Memory Verse[s]:** (ESV)

- Proverbs 16:18: Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall.

**Handwork:**

- Print the clip art coloring page found at the end of this lesson. Before class time, prepare each student page by writing with white crayon, “MENE, MENE, TEKEL” above the hand and “PARSIN” where the hand is (as if the hand is beginning the letter *P*). Students will lightly scribble with crayon or water color over the area where the white words are so that the white words appear; they will then finish coloring the page.

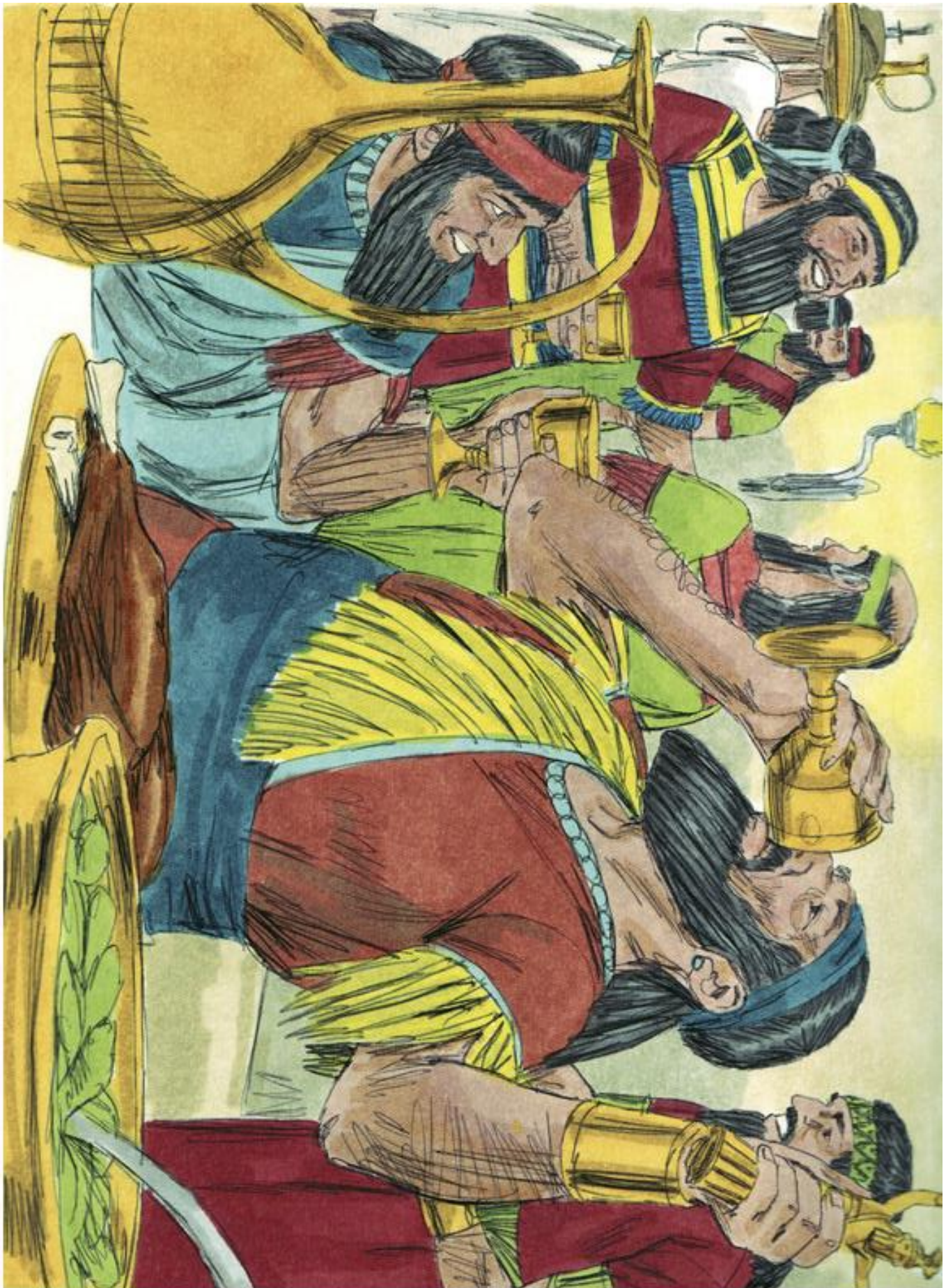
**vessels**

**wine**

**blaspheme**

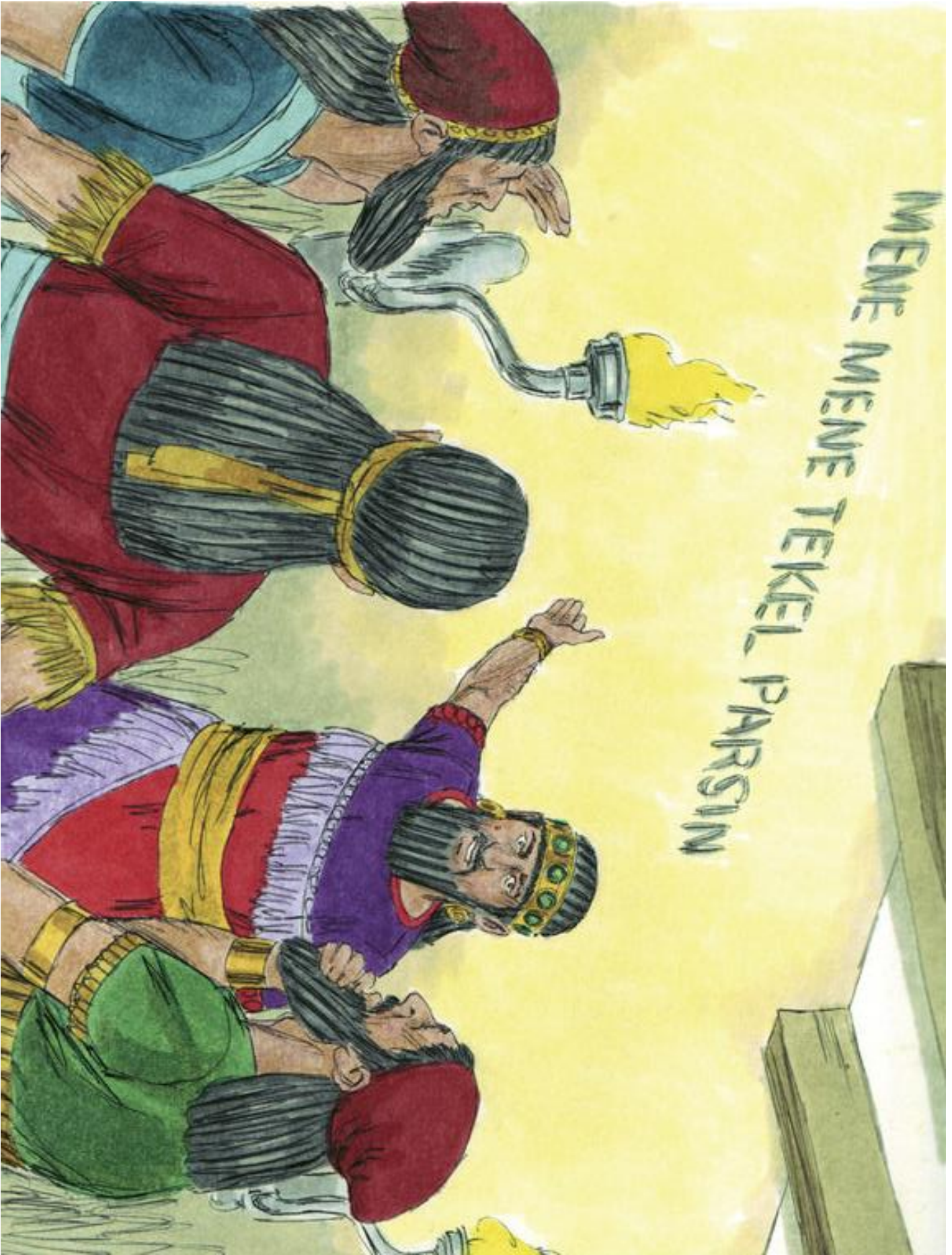
**astrologers, Chaldeans, and soothsayers**

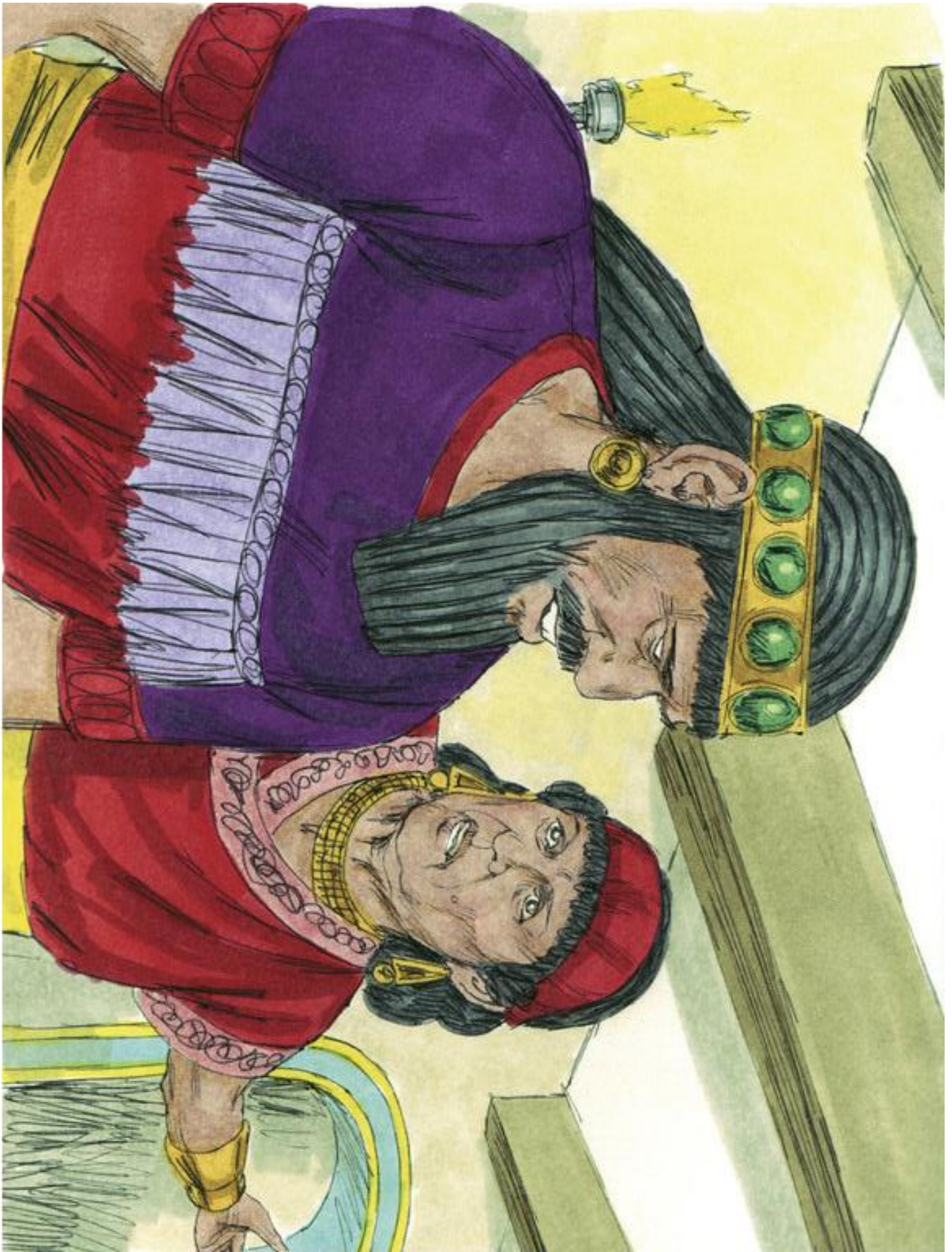
**Medes and Persians**









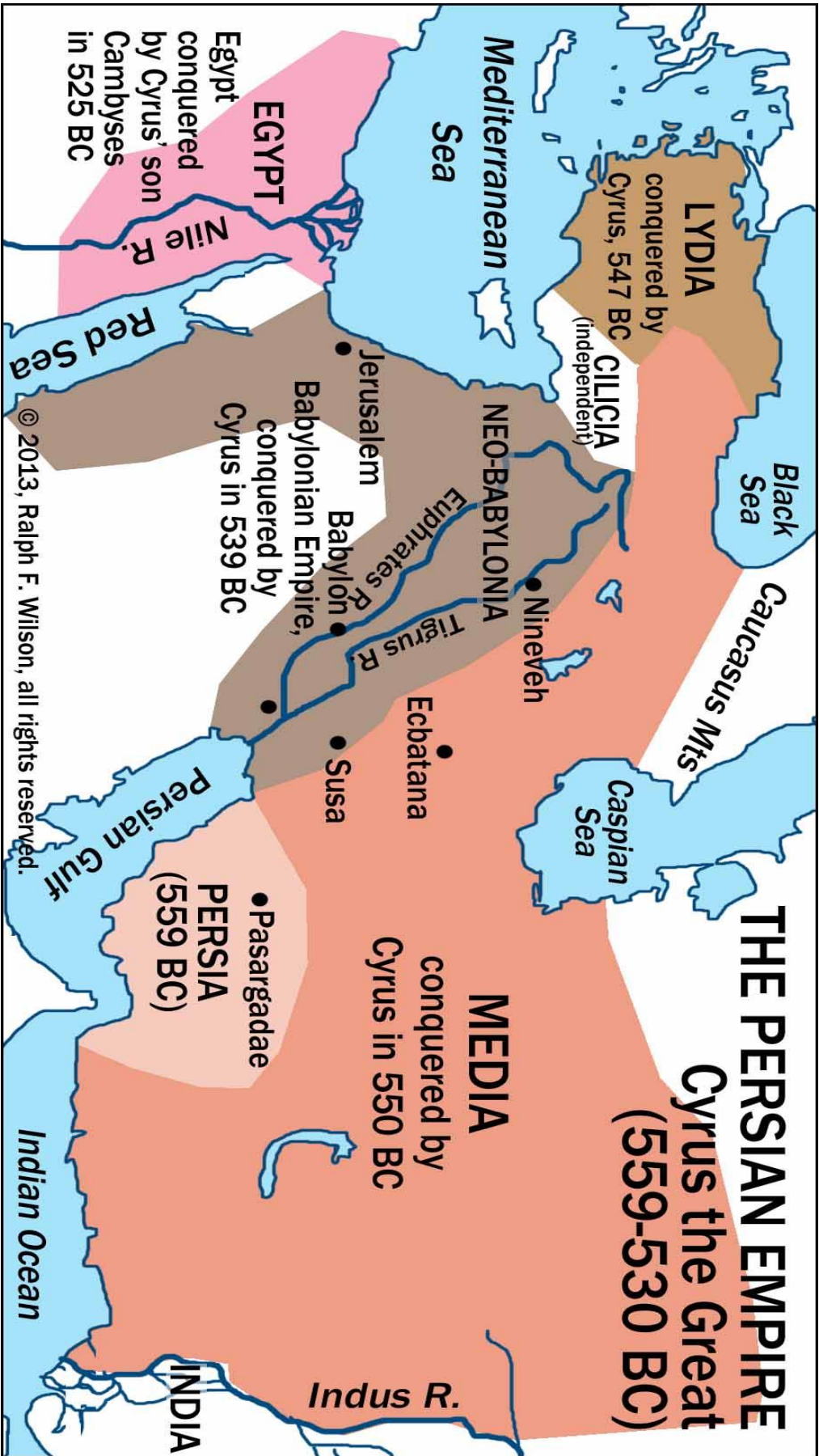








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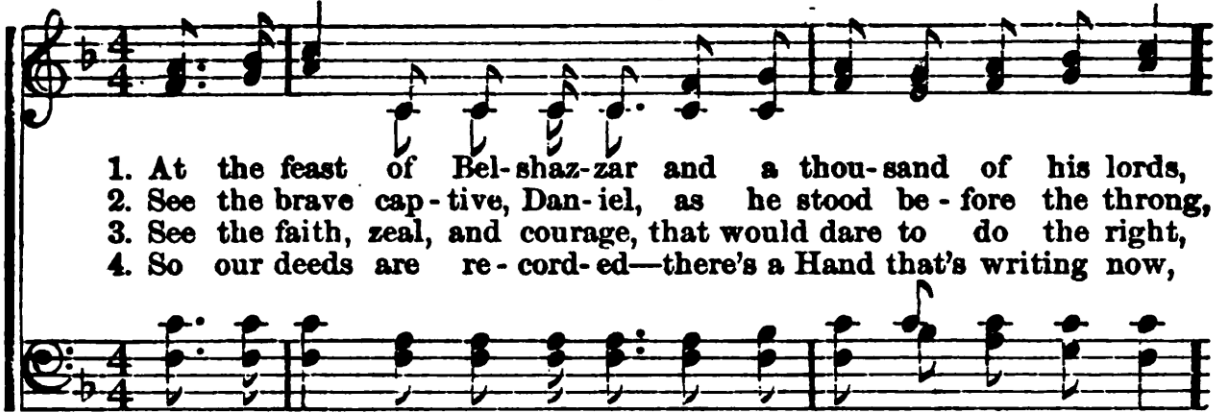


# The Handwriting on the Wall.

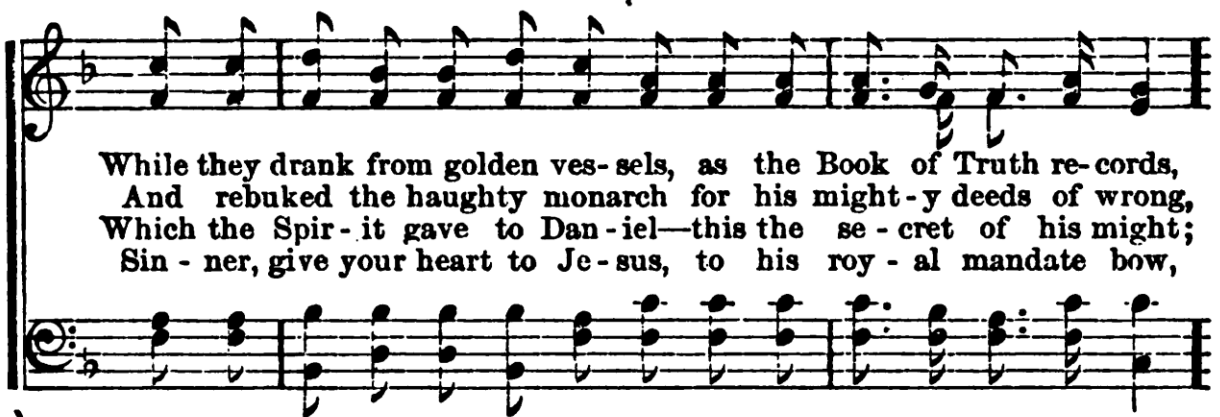
K. S.

"And the king saw the part of the hand that wrote."  
Dan. v. 5.

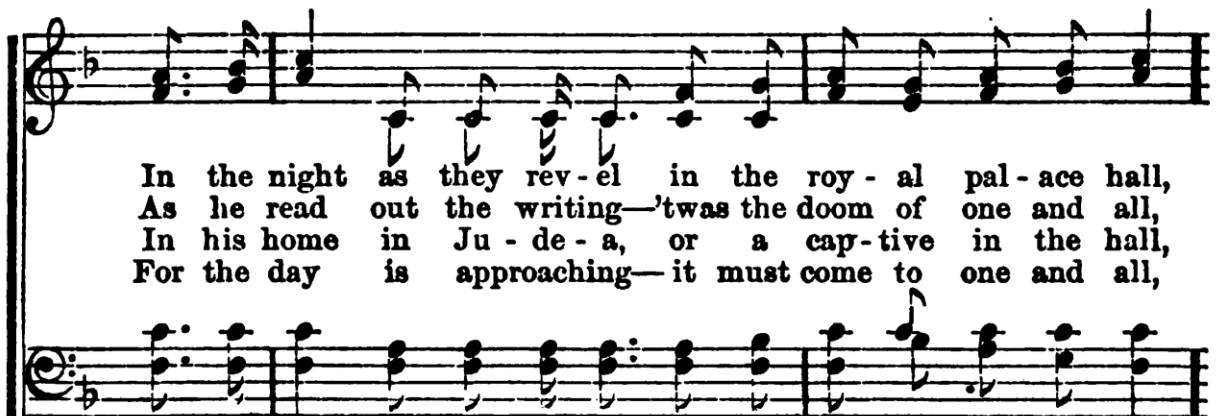
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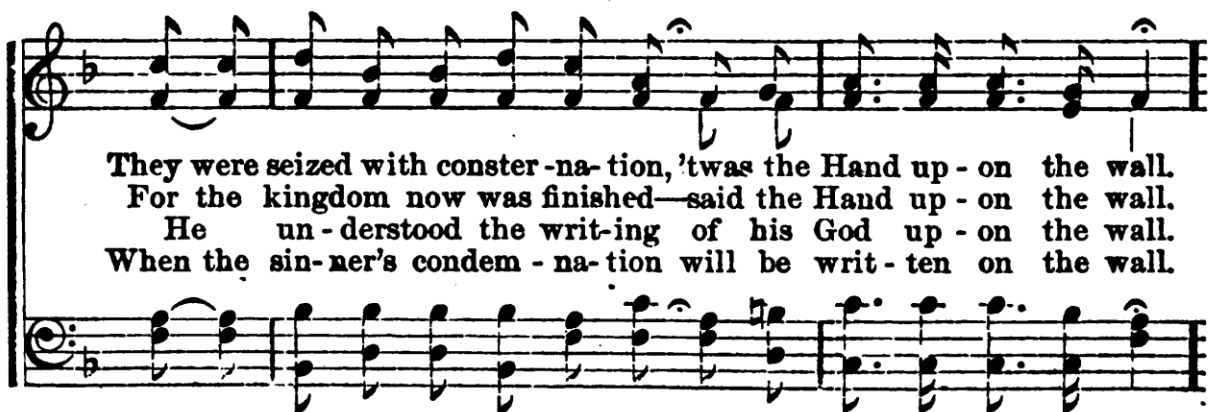
1. At the feast of Bel-shaz-zar and a thou-sand of his lords,  
2. See the brave cap-tive, Dan-iel, as he stood be-fore the throng,  
3. See the faith, zeal, and courage, that would dare to do the right,  
4. So our deeds are re-cord-ed—there's a Hand that's writing now,



While they drank from golden ves-sels, as the Book of Truth re-cords,  
And rebuked the haughty monarch for his might-y deeds of wrong,  
Which the Spir-it gave to Dan-iel—this the se-cret of his might;  
Sin-ner, give your heart to Je-sus, to his roy-al mandate bow,



In the night as they rev-el in the roy-al pal-ace hall,  
As he read out the writing—'twas the doom of one and all,  
In his home in Ju-de-a, or a cap-tive in the hall,  
For the day is approaching—it must come to one and all,



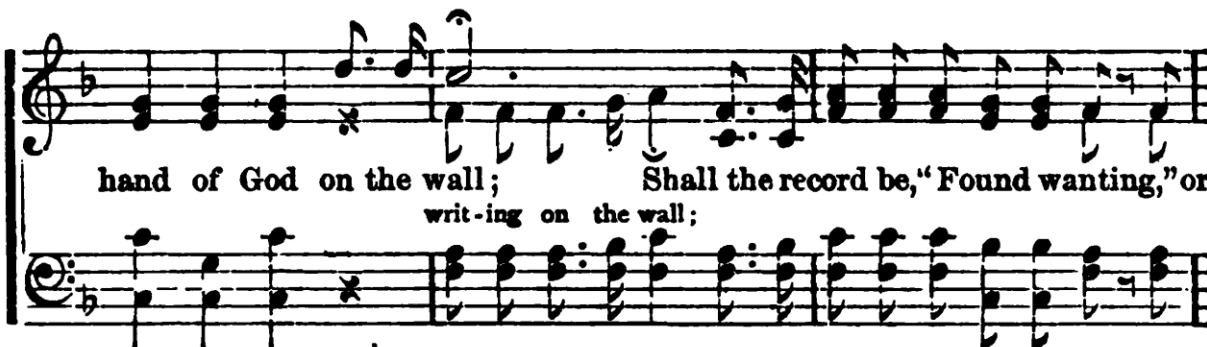
They were seized with conster-na-tion, 'twas the Hand up-on the wall.  
For the kingdom now was finished—said the Hand up-on the wall.  
He un-derstood the writ-ing of his God up-on the wall.  
When the sin-ner's condem-nation will be writ-ten on the wall.

# The Handwriting, etc.—CONCLUDED.

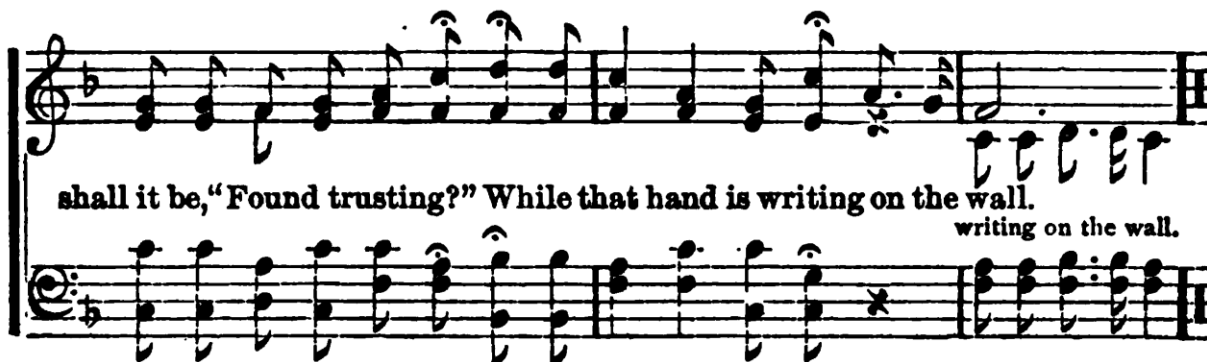
CHORUS.



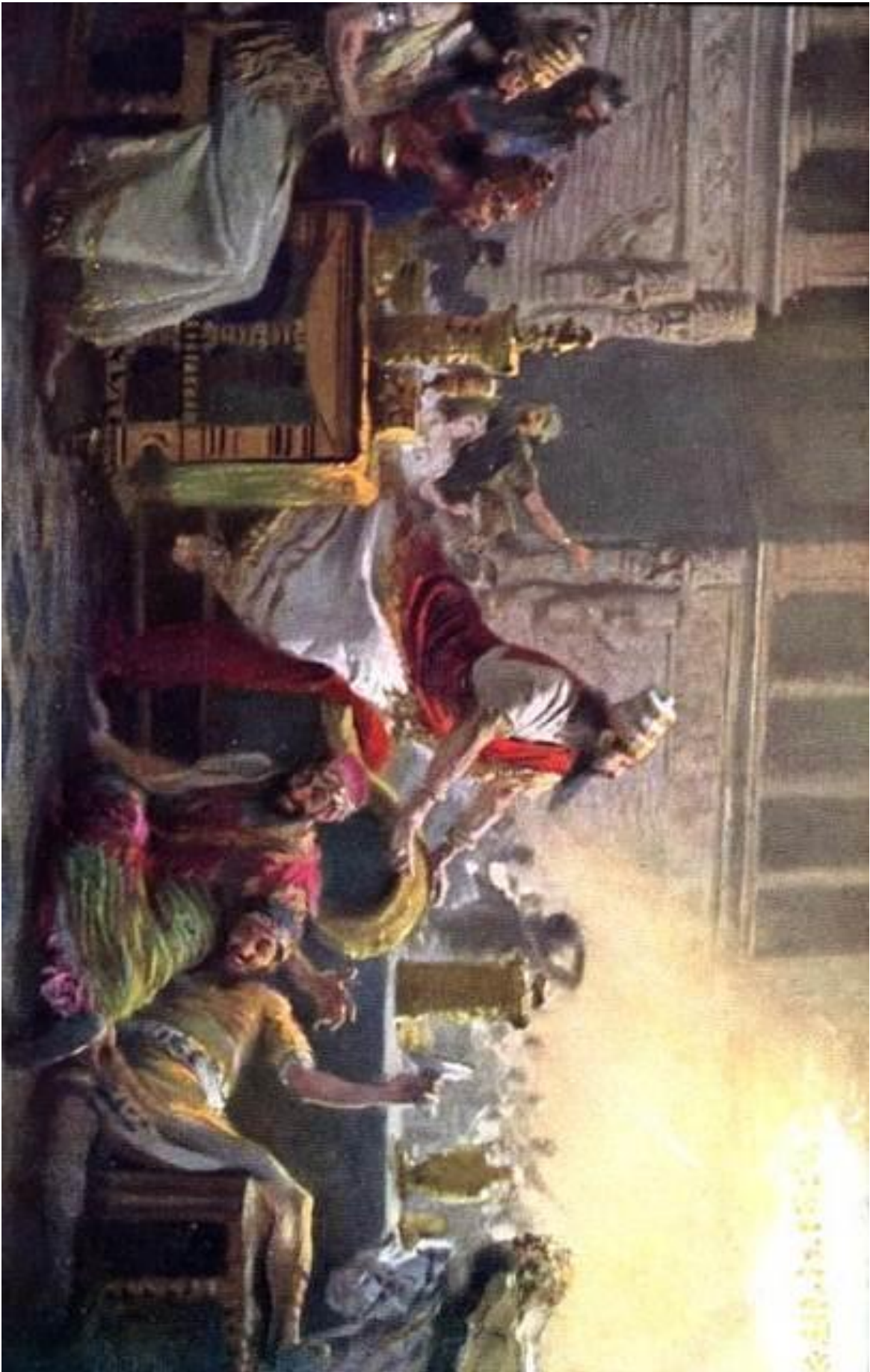
'Tis the hand of God on the wall, 'Tis the  
writ - ing on the wall,



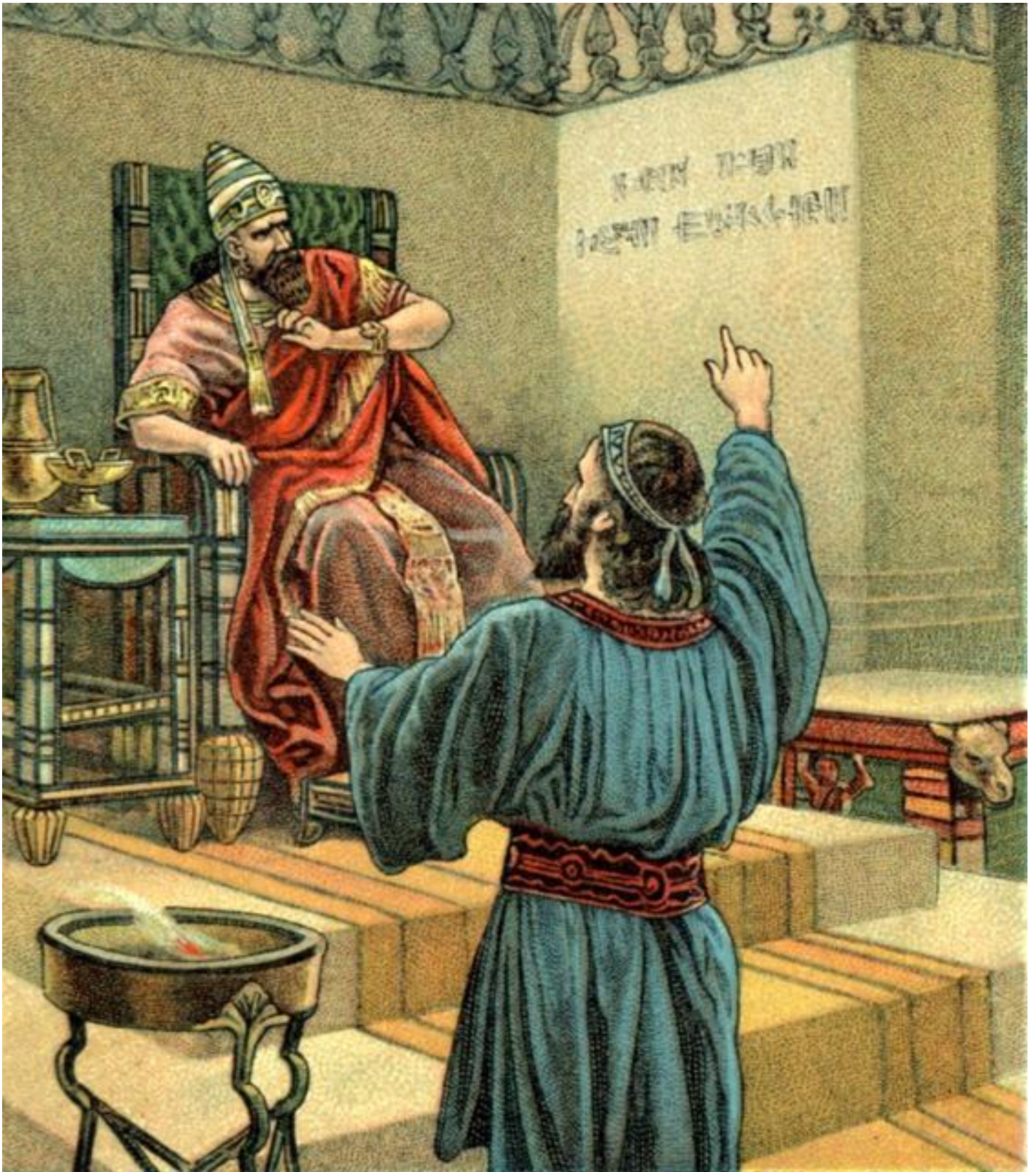
hand of God on the wall; Shall the record be, "Found wanting," or  
writ - ing on the wall;



shall it be, "Found trusting?" While that hand is writing on the wall.  
writing on the wall.



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"Suddenly Babylon has fallen and been broken; wail for her!"  
(Jeremiah 51:8).