

# Deuteronomy 32:30

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

How should one chase a thousand, and two put ten thousand to flight, except their Rock had sold them, and the LORD had shut them up?

## Analysis

**How should one chase a thousand, and two put ten thousand to flight, except their Rock had sold them, and the LORD had shut them up?**—Moses poses a rhetorical question exposing Israel's defeat as divine abandonment, not military weakness. The phrase *eikha yirdof echad elef* (איך ירדף אחד אלף), 'how should one chase a thousand') references covenant blessing's reversal. Leviticus 26:8 promised: 'Five of you shall chase a hundred, and a hundred put ten thousand to flight.' Now the inverse occurs—one enemy defeats a thousand Israelites.

The answer: *im lo ki-tsuram mekharam* (אם לא פִּיצְוָם מַכְרָם), 'except that their Rock had sold them'). *Tsur* (צָוָר, 'Rock') is God's covenant title (Deuteronomy 32:4), emphasizing His unchanging faithfulness. *Makar* (מַכָּר, 'sold') means to hand over, deliver up, abandon—God withdrawing protective presence. The parallel phrase *va-YHVH hisggiram* (וְיְהִי הָסְגִּירָם, 'and the LORD shut them up') uses *sagar*, to deliver over, surrender—God actively giving Israel to enemies. This isn't passive permission but judicial decree.

The theology is sobering: Israel's military strength never derived from numbers, weapons, or strategy but from God's covenant presence. When He withdraws, invincibility becomes vulnerability. This explains defeats by Ai after Achan's sin (Joshua 7) and repeated judge-period cycles. Conversely, Gideon's 300 defeat Midian's thousands (Judges 7) and Jonathan's solo assault routs Philistines (1 Samuel 14) when God fights for Israel.

## Historical Context

---

Moses' rhetorical question found tragic fulfillment throughout Israel's history. After Achan's sin at Ai, thirty-six Israelites died fleeing a small force (Joshua 7:5). During the judges period, small enemy raids devastated Israel when they abandoned God (Judges 2:14-15). The Assyrian conquest (722 BC) and Babylonian destruction (586 BC) demonstrated overwhelming defeats when God 'sold' His people to enemies. Conversely, miraculous victories occurred when God fought for Israel—Joshua's conquest of Canaan, Gideon's rout of Midian, David's defeat of Goliath, Jehoshaphat's victory through worship (2 Chronicles 20). The pattern validates Moses' principle: God's presence determines victory, His absence ensures defeat. This applies spiritually to Christians—'apart from Me you can do nothing' (John 15:5).

## Related Passages

---

**James 2:17** — Faith and works

**Romans 1:17** — The righteous shall live by faith

**1 Corinthians 13:4** — Characteristics of love

**John 15:13** — Greatest form of love

## Study Questions

---

1. How does the reversal of covenant blessings into curses demonstrate the consequences of broken covenant relationship?
2. What does God 'selling' or 'delivering up' His people teach about how He uses even enemies to accomplish disciplinary purposes?

## Interlinear Text

---

רַבָּב הַ נִּצְיָן וְשָׁבֵן יְמֵן אַיְצָה יָרַד רַף אַיְצָה

H349

chase

אָפָד

How should one

אֶלֶף

אֶלֶף

H505

וְשָׁבֵן יְמֵן

H8147

וְשָׁבֵן יְמֵן

H5127

רַבָּב הַ נִּצְיָן

H7233

הַסְגִּינְתָּם: לֹא מִכְּבָב מִכְּבָב מִכְּבָב מִכְּבָב מִכְּבָב מִכְּבָב מִכְּבָב מִכְּבָב מִכְּבָב

H518

except

them

אָמֵן

their Rock

מִכְּבָב

had sold

מִכְּבָב

and the LORD

מִכְּבָב

had shut them up

H3808

H3588

H6697

H4376

H3068

H5462

## Additional Cross-References

---

**Leviticus 26:8** (Light): And five of you shall chase an hundred, and an hundred of you shall put ten thousand to flight: and your enemies shall fall before you by the sword.

**Joshua 23:10** (References Lord): One man of you shall chase a thousand: for the LORD your God, he it is that fighteth for you, as he hath promised you.

**Isaiah 30:17** (Parallel theme): One thousand shall flee at the rebuke of one; at the rebuke of five shall ye flee: till ye be left as a beacon upon the top of a mountain, and as an ensign on an hill.

**Psalms 44:12** (Parallel theme): Thou sellest thy people for nought, and dost not increase thy wealth by their price.

**Psalms 31:8** (Parallel theme): And hast not shut me up into the hand of the enemy: thou hast set my feet in a large room.