

Hosea 1:7

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

But I will have mercy upon the house of Judah, and will save them by the LORD their God, and will not save them by bow, nor by sword, nor by battle, by horses, nor by horsemen.

Analysis

The contrast: 'But I will have mercy upon the house of Judah, and will save them by the LORD their God, and will not save them by bow, nor by sword, nor by battle, by horses, nor by horsemen.' Despite pronouncing judgment on Israel, God promises mercy to Judah—demonstrating sovereign discrimination, not universal abandonment. The phrase 'save them by the LORD their God' emphasizes divine agency, not human effort. 'Not by bow...sword...horses' echoes Psalm 20:7 and Zechariah 4:6 ('Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit'). This prophesies Sennacherib's defeat (701 BC) when God's angel destroyed 185,000 Assyrians besieging Jerusalem (2 Kings 19:35, Isaiah 37:36)—deliverance without human military action. God's sovereignty extends to salvation: He chooses whom to save and the means. Ultimately fulfilled in Christ, who saves not through military power but through suffering love.

Historical Context

Judah survived Israel's fall by 136 years (722-586 BC), largely due to occasional godly kings (Hezekiah, Josiah) and prophetic ministry (Isaiah, Jeremiah). Hezekiah's trust during Assyrian crisis fulfilled this verse: miraculous deliverance 'by the LORD' without battle. Yet Judah's eventual exile to Babylon (586 BC) demonstrates that mercy isn't unconditional—persistent sin ultimately exhausted God's patience. Archaeological evidence confirms Sennacherib's siege (Lachish reliefs, Taylor Prism) and sudden withdrawal from Jerusalem. God's mercy to Judah

demonstrates both sovereign grace (undeserved favor) and covenant faithfulness (Davidic promises, 2 Samuel 7:12-16).

Related Passages

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Study Questions

1. How does God's promise to save Judah 'by the LORD their God' rather than military power challenge my reliance on human resources?
2. What does God's sovereign choice to show mercy to Judah while judging Israel teach about divine election and grace?

Interlinear Text

וְאֶת־ H853	בְּיָת H1004	יְהוּדָה H3063	אֲנִי מֵ H7355	אֲשִׁיעַ מֵ H3467
upon the house		of Judah	But I will have mercy	and will not save
בְּיָהוָה H3068	אֱלֹהֵיהֶם H430	וְלֹא H3808	אֲשִׁיעַ מֵ H3467	בִּקֹּשֶׁת H7198
them by the LORD	their God		and will not save	them by bow
וּבֶחָרֶב H2719	וּבְמִלְחָמָה H4421	בְּסוּסִים H5483	וּבְפָרָשִׁים H6571	
nor by sword	nor by battle	by horses	nor by horsemen	

Additional Cross-References

Zechariah 4:6 (Word): Then he answered and spake unto me, saying, This is the word of the LORD unto Zerubbabel, saying, Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the LORD of hosts.

Isaiah 12:2 (Salvation): Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, and not be afraid: for the LORD JEHOVAH is my strength and my song; he also is become my salvation.

2 Kings 19:35 (References Lord): And it came to pass that night, that the angel of the LORD went out, and smote in the camp of the Assyrians an hundred fourscore and five thousand: and when they arose early in the morning, behold, they were all dead corpses.

Isaiah 7:14 (References Lord): Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.

Hosea 11:12 (References God): Ephraim compasseth me about with lies, and the house of Israel with deceit: but Judah yet ruleth with God, and is faithful with the saints.