

Isaiah 17:4

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And in that day it shall come to pass, that the glory of Jacob shall be made thin, and the fatness of his flesh shall wax lean.

Analysis

'In that day shall the glory of Jacob be made thin, and the fatness of his flesh shall wax lean.' This shift focuses judgment on Israel (Jacob). Their 'glory' (kavod—weight, substance, significance) becomes 'thin' (dalal—diminished, impoverished). The metaphor of 'fatness' becoming 'lean' depicts prosperity turning to poverty, strength to weakness. This agricultural imagery would resonate with original audience—fat livestock indicated blessing, lean indicated famine or disease. The prophecy warns that Israel's rebellion against God (trusting Damascus alliance rather than divine protection) will result in national diminishment. God's covenant people aren't exempt from judgment when they violate covenant.

Historical Context

This prophecy was fulfilled through multiple stages: Tiglath-Pileser III's initial campaigns (734-732 BCE) stripped away northern and eastern territories. Shalmaneser V and Sargon II completed the conquest (722 BCE), deporting 27,290 people according to Assyrian records. The northern kingdom never recovered—ten tribes lost to history. Archaeological evidence shows widespread destruction and depopulation in this period. The 'glory of Jacob' literally became thin—reduced population, territory, and sovereignty.

Related Passages

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Study Questions

1. What does Israel's judgment alongside their pagan allies teach about covenant unfaithfulness?
2. How does the 'fatness to leanness' metaphor illustrate prosperity's reversal under judgment?
3. Why doesn't being God's chosen people exempt Israel from consequences of rebellion?

Interlinear Text

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And in that day

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הָיָה וְאֵל

H1931

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יִכָּזֶה:

shall wax lean

H7329

Additional Cross-References

Isaiah 10:16 (Glory): Therefore shall the Lord, the Lord of hosts, send among his fat ones leanness; and under his glory he shall kindle a burning like the burning of a fire.