

Isaiah 17:9

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

In that day shall his strong cities be as a forsaken bough, and an uppermost branch, which they left because of the children of Israel: and there shall be desolation.

Analysis

'In that day shall his strong cities be as a forsaken bough, and an uppermost branch, which they left because of the children of Israel: and there shall be desolation.' The 'strong cities' (fortified urban centers) become like abandoned tree branches—once verdant, now forsaken. The phrase 'which they left because of the children of Israel' likely refers to Canaanite cities abandoned during Joshua's conquest, now serving as parallel for Israel's own coming desolation. Ironic role reversal: Israel will experience what they inflicted on Canaanites. This demonstrates the principle that covenant unfaithfulness leads to experiencing the curses meant for covenant breakers. God's covenant includes both blessings for obedience and curses for disobedience (Deuteronomy 28).

Historical Context

The reference to Canaanite cities 'left because of children of Israel' recalls the conquest under Joshua, when Canaanite inhabitants fled or were destroyed as God drove them out. Cities like Jericho, Ai, and Hazor fell to Israel. Now Israel faces similar conquest—their strong cities becoming desolate as Canaanite cities were. This fulfills Deuteronomy 28's covenant curses for disobedience. Archaeologically, many Israelite cities show 8th century destruction layers from Assyrian conquest, validating the prophecy. The covenant's reciprocal nature means blessings and curses both come from the same divine source based on faithfulness.

Related Passages

Revelation 20:12 – Judgment according to deeds

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Study Questions

1. What does Israel experiencing Canaanite-like desolation teach about covenant curses applying to God's people?
2. How does this demonstrate that divine election doesn't guarantee exemption from judgment for unfaithfulness?
3. In what ways do Deuteronomy 28's covenant curses find fulfillment in historical judgments?

Interlinear Text

עָזָב וְ מַעֲזָז וְ שָׁרֵר יְהִי וְ הַה וְ אַבְּיִזְמָם
In that day H1931 H1961 cities shall his strong be as a forsaken
H3117 H5892 H4581 H5800

בָּחַ רָשׁ	וְהַ אַמְּרָה	אָשָׁר	עָזָבָה	מִפְנֵי
bough	and an uppermost branch	H834	be as a forsaken	because

שָׁמֶן: בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל הַבָּיִת הַיְהוּדִי וְיַעֲמֹד כִּי
and there shall be desolation of the children of Israel H1961 and there shall be desolation
H1121 H3478 H8077

Additional Cross-References

Isaiah 27:10 (Parallel theme): Yet the defenced city shall be desolate, and the habitation forsaken, and left like a wilderness: there shall the calf feed, and there shall he lie down, and consume the branches thereof.

