

Isaiah 19:13

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

The princes of Zoan are become fools, the princes of Noph are deceived; they have also seduced Egypt, even they that are the stay of the tribes thereof.

Analysis

'The princes of Zoan are become fools, the princes of Noph are deceived; they have also seduced Egypt, even they that are the stay of the tribes thereof.' Egypt's leaders aren't just wrong—they're fools who've been deceived and who deceive others. Noph (Memphis) was Egypt's ancient capital; its princes represent the nation's leadership core. The 'stay of the tribes' (cornerstone/support of provinces) indicates these leaders should provide stability but instead cause ruin. This describes leadership failure's catastrophic effect—when those responsible for guidance are themselves deceived, they lead entire nations astray. The progression from being deceived to deceiving others demonstrates sin's communicable nature—corrupted leaders corrupt followers. Reformed ecclesiology and political theology emphasize leaders' weighty responsibility, as their failures affect all under their influence (James 3:1).

Historical Context

Egyptian history during this period shows exactly this pattern—leaders making disastrous decisions based on false assessments. Encouraging Levantine rebellion against Assyria while unable to provide effective support was such a mistake—based on deceived understandings of Egyptian military capability and Assyrian weakness. These policies seduced smaller nations into rebellion that ended in their destruction. Egypt's leadership failure had international consequences, contributing to widespread suffering. Historical examples abound of leadership

failures producing national disasters: wrong alliances, failed strategies, moral corruption at the top spreading downward. This validated Isaiah's diagnosis—Egypt's problem wasn't just external threats but internal leadership corruption deceiving the nation.

Related Passages

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Study Questions

1. What does leadership being deceived and deceiving teach about responsibility's weight?
2. How do corrupted leaders corrupt entire populations under their influence?
3. Why are leadership failures particularly catastrophic compared to individual sins?

Interlinear Text

נָזָלְוּ	שָׁרִים	בְּנֵי	צָעִים	שָׁרִים	נָזָלְוּ
are become fools	The princes	of Zoan	are deceived	The princes	of Noph
H2973	H8269	H6814	H5377	H8269	H5297
שָׁבְטִים:	פְּנֵי תָּ	מִצְרַיִם	אַתָּה	הַתְּעוּ וְ	שָׁבְטִים:
of the tribes	even they that are the stay	they have also seduced	H853	H4714	H8582
H7626	H6438	H8582			

Additional Cross-References

Jeremiah 2:16 (Parallel theme): Also the children of Noph and Tahapanes have broken the crown of thy head.

Ezekiel 30:13 (References Egypt): Thus saith the Lord GOD; I will also destroy the idols, and I will cause their images to cease out of Noph; and there shall be no more a prince of the land of Egypt: and I will put a fear in the land of Egypt.

Jeremiah 46:14 (References Egypt): Declare ye in Egypt, and publish in Migdol, and publish in Noph and in Tahpanhes: say ye, Stand fast, and prepare thee; for the sword shall devour round about thee.

Jeremiah 46:19 (References Egypt): O thou daughter dwelling in Egypt, furnish thyself to go into captivity: for Noph shall be waste and desolate without an inhabitant.

Zechariah 10:4 (Parallel theme): Out of him came forth the corner, out of him the nail, out of him the battle bow, out of him every oppressor together.

Isaiah 19:11 (Parallel theme): Surely the princes of Zoan are fools, the counsel of the wise counsellors of Pharaoh is become brutish: how say ye unto Pharaoh, I am the son of the wise, the son of ancient kings?