

Isaiah 19:16

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

In that day shall Egypt be like unto women: and it shall be afraid and fear because of the shaking of the hand of the LORD of hosts, which he shaketh over it.

Analysis

'In that day shall Egypt be like unto women: and it shall be afraid and fear because of the shaking of the hand of the LORD of hosts, which he shaketh over it.' Egypt becomes 'like women'—not sexist but using ancient Near Eastern military metaphor where 'like women' meant 'unable to fight' (Jeremiah 50:37; 51:30; Nahum 3:13). Egypt's military prowess fails, becoming weak and fearful. The 'shaking of the hand' represents raised hand about to strike—the threatening gesture produces terror before the blow falls. God's mere threatening gesture reduces Egypt to fearful paralysis. This demonstrates divine power's superiority over human strength—what humans consider mighty (Egypt's military) God can reduce to trembling weakness. The verse emphasizes psychological defeat: fear itself paralyzes, showing that moral courage is also a divine gift. When God withdraws courage, even mighty warriors cannot fight.

Historical Context

Egypt's military reputation was formidable—chariotry, infantry, archers, fortifications. Yet against Assyria and later powers, Egyptian armies repeatedly failed despite apparent advantages. The defeat at Eltekeh (701 BCE) saw Egyptian forces flee despite initially engaging. Later Persian and Greek conquests saw similar patterns—seemingly strong Egyptian forces proving ineffective. The prophecy's fulfillment showed military power divorced from divine blessing is empty. Historical parallels abound: nations with impressive militaries suffering

humiliating defeats through morale collapse, poor leadership, or divine intervention. Ultimate military success depends on spiritual factors more than material capabilities—a principle repeatedly validated throughout biblical and subsequent history.

Related Passages

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Study Questions

1. What does Egypt's martial strength becoming weakness teach about human power divorced from God?
2. How does God's threatening gesture producing paralysis demonstrate psychological dimensions of divine judgment?
3. Why is moral courage (ability to fight) also a divine gift subject to withdrawal?

Interlinear Text

בַּיּוֹם	וְהָיָה	מִצְרַיִם	כְּנָשִׁים	וְהָיָה		
In that day	H1931	H1961	shall Egypt	be like unto women		
H3117		H4714	H802	H2729		
וְיָרֶא	מִפְּנֵי	תְנוּפֹת	יָד	יְהוָה	צְבָא	אֲשֶׁר
and fear	because	of the shaking	of the hand	of the LORD	of hosts	H834
H6342	H6440	H8573	H3027	H3068	H6635	
וְהָיָה	מִן	יָד				
H1931	which he shaketh	H5921				
	H5130					

Additional Cross-References

Jeremiah 51:30 (Parallel theme): The mighty men of Babylon have forborn to fight, they have remained in their holds: their might hath failed; they became as women: they have burned her dwellingplaces; her bars are broken.

Nahum 3:13 (Parallel theme): Behold, thy people in the midst of thee are women: the gates of thy land shall be set wide open unto thine enemies: the fire shall devour thy bars.

Isaiah 11:15 (References Lord): And the LORD shall utterly destroy the tongue of the Egyptian sea; and with his mighty wind shall he shake his hand over the river, and shall smite it in the seven streams, and make men go over dryshod.

Jeremiah 50:37 (Parallel theme): A sword is upon their horses, and upon their chariots, and upon all the mingled people that are in the midst of her; and they shall become as women: a sword is upon her treasures; and they shall be robbed.

Isaiah 10:32 (Parallel theme): As yet shall he remain at Nob that day: he shall shake his hand against the mount of the daughter of Zion, the hill of Jerusalem.

Zechariah 2:9 (References Lord): For, behold, I will shake mine hand upon them, and they shall be a spoil to their servants: and ye shall know that the LORD of hosts hath sent me.