

Isaiah 19:5

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And the waters shall fail from the sea, and the river shall be wasted and dried up.

Analysis

'And the waters shall fail from the sea, and the river shall be wasted and dried up.' The Nile—Egypt's lifeblood—fails. Egypt's entire economy, agriculture, and civilization depended absolutely on the Nile's annual flood cycle. Without it, Egypt becomes uninhabitable desert. The 'sea' refers to the Nile Delta region and associated lakes. This judgment strikes Egypt's fundamental source of life and prosperity. God demonstrates sovereignty over nature itself—He who created the Nile can shut it off. This directly challenges Egyptian religion which deified the Nile (Hapi, the Nile god) and credited Egyptian gods with controlling floods. By announcing Yahweh's control over the Nile, Isaiah declares Israel's God superior to Egypt's entire pantheon. Historically, while the Nile never completely dried up, severe low floods caused devastating famines (Joseph's story, Genesis 41, references this pattern).

Historical Context

Egypt's absolute dependence on the Nile can't be overstated—Greek historian Herodotus called Egypt 'the gift of the Nile.' Annual floods deposited fertile silt, enabling agriculture in otherwise arid desert. Low flood years caused famine; excessive floods destroyed infrastructure. Egyptian records document varying flood levels and their consequences. While the Nile didn't literally dry up, periods of significantly reduced flooding occurred, causing severe economic and social crises. The prophecy uses hyperbolic language to emphasize God's control over Egypt's fundamental life source. Modern damming has altered Nile patterns, but

ancient Egypt's civilization rose and fell with flood cycles, validating the river's absolute importance.

Related Passages

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Study Questions

1. What does God's control over the Nile teach about sovereignty over natural resources nations depend on?
2. How does this judgment challenge Egyptian deification of the Nile and associated gods?
3. Why does God often judge nations by removing their fundamental sources of prosperity?

Interlinear Text

וַיִּבְשׁוּ	מֵי הַיָּם	מִן הַיָּם	וְהַנָּהָר	יִבְרָךְ ב	וַיִּבְשׁוּ:
and dried up	And the waters	from the sea	and the river	shall be wasted	shall fail
H3001	H4325	H3220	H5104	H2717	H5405

Additional Cross-References

Jeremiah 51:36 (Parallel theme): Therefore thus saith the LORD; Behold, I will plead thy cause, and take vengeance for thee; and I will dry up her sea, and make her springs dry.

Ezekiel 30:12 (Parallel theme): And I will make the rivers dry, and sell the land into the hand of the wicked: and I will make the land waste, and all that is therein, by the hand of strangers: I the LORD have spoken it.

