

Isaiah 22:10

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And ye have numbered the houses of Jerusalem, and the houses have ye broken down to fortify the wall.

Analysis

And ye have numbered the houses of Jerusalem (וְאַתָּה בְּطַעַת יְרוּשָׁלָם סִפְרָתָם, ve'et-batei Yerushalaim sefarten)—conducting a census of buildings for strategic purposes. **Numbered** (סִפְר, safar) means to count, take inventory.

And the houses have ye broken down to fortify the wall (וְתַתְמֹצְאוּ הַבָּתִים לְבָצָר) (הַחֹמֶה, vattittsu habattim lebatser hachomah)—they demolished houses to obtain building materials for wall repairs, a desperate but pragmatic siege preparation. "Fortify" (בָּצָר, batsar) means to make inaccessible, strengthen defenses.

This shows the extent of their preparations: willing to sacrifice homes for military defense. It was logical—fewer buildings inside meant more materials for walls, and possibly clearer sight lines for defenders. But the repeated emphasis on human efforts (vv.8-11) without mentioning God highlights the fundamental problem: sophisticated strategy divorced from spiritual dependence. They trusted engineering and military science instead of the God who controls nations and battles.

Historical Context

Josephus records that during later Roman sieges, Jerusalem's defenders similarly demolished buildings for materials and to create defensive zones. Nehemiah earlier rebuilt Jerusalem's walls (Nehemiah 3-4), showing how important wall integrity was for ancient city defense. Breaking down houses for fortification was

an extreme measure, showing how seriously Jerusalem took the Assyrian threat. Yet Isaiah's point stands: all this preparation was futile without repentance and trust in God.

Related Passages

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

1 John 4:8 — God is love

Study Questions

1. What modern equivalents exist to 'numbering houses and breaking them down'—desperate measures that show trust in human ingenuity over divine provision?
2. How can we distinguish between wise preparation and faithless self-reliance when facing threats or challenges?
3. What does it reveal about priorities when people will sacrifice homes for walls but won't humble themselves before God?

Interlinear Text

וְתַתְּצִוָּה אֶת־יְמִינְךָ תִּמְכְּר בָּתְּמִימָנֶךָ יְרוּשָׁלָם סְפִירָה מִנְכָּרְבָּה מִנְבָּרְבָּה וְתַתְּצִוָּה
H853 and the houses of Jerusalem And ye have numbered have ye broken down
H1004 H3389 H5608 H5422

בָּנָה רְבָּנָה תִּמְכְּר בָּתְּמִימָנֶךָ
and the houses to fortify the wall
H1004 H1219 H2346

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