

# Isaiah 24:20

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

The earth shall reel to and fro like a drunkard, and shall be removed like a cottage; and the transgression thereof shall be heavy upon it; and it shall fall, and not rise again.

## Analysis

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**The earth shall reel to and fro like a drunkard** (נוע תנוע ארך בשכור)—The verb *nua* (stagger, reel) appears twice (intensified infinitive), conveying violent instability. The earth (*erets*) staggers like a *shikkor* (drunkard) who has lost all equilibrium. **And shall be removed like a cottage**—The Hebrew *melunah* refers to a temporary field shelter, a flimsy hut that strong winds easily blow away. The earth itself, seemingly stable and permanent, becomes as unstable as a drunk and as fragile as a shack.

**The transgression thereof shall be heavy upon it** (וַכֶּבֶד עָלֶיהָ פְּשָׁעָה)—The verb *kavad* (heavy, weighty) describes crushing weight. Human *pesha* (rebellion, transgression) accumulates mass until the earth cannot bear it. **And it shall fall, and not rise again**—This eschatological finality points beyond historical judgments to the ultimate cosmic upheaval. The verb *naphal* (fall) with negative *lo-tosif qum* (will not rise again) indicates permanent collapse. Peter describes this same event: 'the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up' (2 Peter 3:10). This isn't mere political upheaval but cosmic dissolution under sin's unbearable weight.

## Historical Context

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Isaiah 24-27 (the 'Isaiah Apocalypse') shifts from specific nation judgments (chapters 13-23) to universal, cosmic judgment. Written in the 8th century BC, this

prophetic vision transcends its immediate context to describe end-times events. Early Christians and Reformers saw here descriptions of final judgment preceding the New Heavens and New Earth.

## Related Passages

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**John 15:13** — Greatest form of love

**1 John 4:8** — God is love

## Study Questions

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1. How does the image of earth staggering under transgression's weight personify creation's groaning under sin (Romans 8:22)?
2. What does it mean that sin has cosmic consequences, not just personal or social ones?
3. How should the certainty of earth's final collapse shape our priorities and investments in this present world?

## Interlinear Text

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תָּנָה וַעֲ	תָּנָה וַעֲ	אֶרֶץ	כַּשֵּׁכַּ וּר	וְהִתְנוּדָה ה	כְּמִלּוֹנָה ה
shall reel	shall reel	The earth	like a drunkard	and shall be removed	like a cottage
H5128	H5128	H776	H7910	H5110	H4412
וְכָבֵד	עַל יְה	פְּשָׁעָה ה	וְנָפְלָה ה	וְנָפְלָה ה	וְנָפְלָה ה
thereof shall be heavy		and the transgression	upon it and it shall fall		
H3513	H5921	H6588	H5307		H3808
תָּס יִרְ	וְלֹא יִרְ				
again	and not rise				
H3254	H6965				

## Additional Cross-References

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**Isaiah 19:14** (Parallel theme): The LORD hath mingled a perverse spirit in the midst thereof: and they have caused Egypt to err in every work thereof, as a drunken man staggereth in his vomit.

**Isaiah 29:9** (Parallel theme): Stay yourselves, and wonder; cry ye out, and cry: they are drunken, but not with wine; they stagger, but not with strong drink.

**Amos 8:14** (Resurrection): They that swear by the sin of Samaria, and say, Thy god, O Dan, liveth; and, The manner of Beer-sheba liveth; even they shall fall, and never rise up again.

**Daniel 11:19** (Parallel theme): Then he shall turn his face toward the fort of his own land: but he shall stumble and fall, and not be found.

**Revelation 18:21** (Parallel theme): And a mighty angel took up a stone like a great millstone, and cast it into the sea, saying, Thus with violence shall that great city Babylon be thrown down, and shall be found no more at all.