

Isaiah 28:15

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Because ye have said, We have made a covenant with death, and with hell are we at agreement; when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, it shall not come unto us: for we have made lies our refuge, and under falsehood have we hid ourselves:

Analysis

Because ye have said, We have made a covenant with death, and with hell are we at agreement; when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, it shall not come unto us: for we have made lies our refuge, and under falsehood have we hid ourselves: Isaiah exposes the scornful leaders' delusional security. **We have made a covenant with death** (karatnu berit et-mavet, כָּרַתְנוּ בְּרִית אֶת-מָוֶת) and **with hell are we at agreement** (ve-et-she'ol asinu chozeh, וְעִתָּהּ אִשְׁנוּ חֹזֶה, with Sheol we have made a vision/pact) likely refers to treaties with Egypt and other powers, trusting political alliances rather than God. Ironically, these death-pacts can't protect from death. Mavet (מָוֶת, death) and she'ol (שְׁאוֹל, grave/underworld) represent ultimate enemies covenants cannot defeat.

When the overflowing scourge shall pass through (ki ya'avov shot shofef, כִּי יַעֲבֹר שׁוֹט שׁוֹפֵף, when the overwhelming whip passes through) depicts Assyrian/Babylonian invasion as flood of judgment. They think their political machinations exempt them: **it shall not come unto us**. The reason for false confidence: **we have made lies our refuge, and under falsehood have we hid ourselves** (ki samnu kazav machsenu va-sheker nistarna, כִּי שָׁמְנוּ כָזָב מַחֲסֵנוּ וּבִשְׁקֶר נִסְתַּרְנוּ, Their refuge is lies; their hiding place is deception. This could mean:

1. trusting false prophecies

2. diplomatic deception, or
3. self-deception about their security.

All three apply.

Historical Context

Judah's kings repeatedly made treaties with Egypt against Assyria/Babylon, despite prophetic warnings (Isaiah 30:1-7, 31:1, Jeremiah 37:7). These alliances failed catastrophically—Egypt couldn't save Jerusalem from Babylon. In AD 70, Jewish leaders trusted in the temple and their political strategies; Rome destroyed both. Revelation 9:21 describes those who won't repent even under judgment. Human nature persists in trusting lies rather than God. Every generation makes 'covenants with death'—false securities that cannot save.

Related Passages

1 John 4:8 — God is love

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

Study Questions

1. What modern 'covenants with death' (false securities, misplaced trusts) do people rely on instead of God?
2. How do lies become a 'refuge' and falsehood a 'hiding place' for those avoiding confrontation with truth?
3. What would it look like to break your 'covenant with death' and trust God alone for security?

Interlinear Text

כִּי	אָמַרְתָּם	כָּךְ תִּכְנֶה	בְּרִית	אֶת	מָוֶת	וְעַם
H3588	Because ye have said	We have made	a covenant	H854	with death	H5973
	H559	H3772	H1285		H4194	
וְעִם	אֶת	שָׁמַיִם	וְעִם	אֶת	אֶרֶץ	חַיִּים
H7585	and with hell	are we	at agreement	when the overflowing	scourge	H3588
	H7585	H6213	H2374	H7857	H7752	
עָבַר	לֹא	יָבוֹא	כִּי	עָלֵינוּ	שֶׁ	כָּזָב
shall pass through	H3808	it shall not come	H3588	unto us for we have made		lies
H5674		H935		H7760		H3577
מַחֲסֵנוּ	וּבִשְׁקֶר	נִסְתַּתְּרֵנוּ:				
our refuge	and under falsehood	have we hid				
H4268	H8267	H5641				

Additional Cross-References

Isaiah 28:18 (Covenant): And your covenant with death shall be disannulled, and your agreement with hell shall not stand; when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, then ye shall be trodden down by it.

Amos 2:4 (Parallel theme): Thus saith the LORD; For three transgressions of Judah, and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof; because they have despised the law of the LORD, and have not kept his commandments, and their lies caused them to err, after the which their fathers have walked:

Ezekiel 13:22 (Creation): Because with lies ye have made the heart of the righteous sad, whom I have not made sad; and strengthened the hands of the wicked, that he should not return from his wicked way, by promising him life:

Hosea 2:18 (Covenant): And in that day will I make a covenant for them with the beasts of the field, and with the fowls of heaven, and with the creeping things of the ground: and I will break the bow and the sword and the battle out of the earth, and will make them to lie down safely.

Daniel 11:22 (Covenant): And with the arms of a flood shall they be overflowed from before him, and shall be broken; yea, also the prince of the covenant.

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