

Isaiah 29:1

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Woe to Ariel, to Ariel, the city where David dwelt! add ye year to year; let them kill sacrifices.

Analysis

Woe to Ariel, to Ariel, the city where David dwelt! The name אֶרִיאֵל (Ariel) carries layered meaning: 'lion of God' or 'altar hearth.' Isaiah employs this cryptic designation for Jerusalem, the city David established as Israel's capital. The repetition intensifies the lament—God Himself pronounces woe upon His own sanctuary city. The phrase **add ye year to year; let them kill sacrifices** (קִפּוּ שָׁנָה עַל־שָׁנָה, siphu shanah al-shanah) drips with irony: continue your empty religious calendar, pile up your meaningless sacrifices.

This oracle dates to Hezekiah's reign (circa 701 BC) when Judah maintained religious observances while trusting political alliances over Yahweh. The sacrifices continued at the Temple, but spiritual complacency pervaded. God's woe announces that ritual without righteousness provokes judgment, not blessing. The city hosting His altar would become like an altar itself—a place of burning and slaughter.

Historical Context

Isaiah prophesied during the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah (740-686 BC). Jerusalem had become synonymous with the Temple and sacrificial worship, yet the nation's heart had drifted. Within fifteen years of this prophecy, Sennacherib's Assyrian army would besiege Jerusalem (701 BC), fulfilling Isaiah's warning of divine distress upon Ariel.

Hosea 8:13 (Sacrifice): They sacrifice flesh for the sacrifices of mine offerings, and eat it; but the LORD accepteth them not; now will he remember their iniquity, and visit their sins: they shall return to Egypt.

Hosea 5:6 (Parallel theme): They shall go with their flocks and with their herds to seek the LORD; but they shall not find him; he hath withdrawn himself from them.

Hosea 9:4 (Sacrifice): They shall not offer wine offerings to the LORD, neither shall they be pleasing unto him: their sacrifices shall be unto them as the bread of mourners; all that eat thereof shall be polluted: for their bread for their soul shall not come into the house of the LORD.