

Isaiah 29:5

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Moreover the multitude of thy strangers shall be like small dust, and the multitude of the terrible ones shall be as chaff that passeth away: yea, it shall be at an instant suddenly.

Analysis

Moreover the multitude of thy strangers shall be like small dust (וְהַיָּה כַּאֲבָק)—the זָרִים (zarim, strangers/enemies) who attack Jerusalem will themselves be reduced to fine dust. **And the multitude of the terrible ones shall be as chaff that passeth away** (וְכַמֹּץ עַבְרָר)—the עֲרִיצִים (aritsim, tyrants/ruthless ones) will become like γν (motz, chaff) blown away. **Yea, it shall be at an instant suddenly** (וְהַיָּה לְפָתָע פָּתָאָם) (vehayah lefeta pit'om).

The oracle pivots dramatically from verses 1-4's siege to sudden deliverance. After describing Jerusalem's humiliation, Isaiah announces the besiegers' own destruction—not through prolonged warfare but instantaneously. This prophesies Sennacherib's 701 BC defeat when the angel of the Lord killed 185,000 Assyrian soldiers in one night (Isaiah 37:36). The terrible ones become chaff; the dust-like enemies vanish.

Historical Context

The fulfillment came in 701 BC when Assyrian king Sennacherib besieged Jerusalem under Hezekiah. Despite overwhelming military superiority, the Assyrian army was decimated overnight (2 Kings 19:35-36). Sennacherib's own records (Taylor Prism) acknowledge withdrawing from Jerusalem after receiving tribute,

but notably avoid mentioning conquering the city—a conspicuous omission suggesting catastrophic loss.

Related Passages

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Study Questions

1. How does this sudden reversal reveal God's sovereignty over seemingly invincible enemies?
2. What situations in your life seem hopeless until God acts 'at an instant suddenly'?
3. How does this verse encourage trust when surrounded by 'terrible ones'?

Interlinear Text

בְּמִלְחָמָה כַּאֲבָלָק יְהִי הֵן
H1961 dust shall be like small Moreover the multitude of thy strangers
H80 H1851 H1995 H2114

עַבְרָה כְּמָה זֶה בְּמִלְחָמָה שְׁרֵץ יְמִינָה
shall be as chaff that passeth away Moreover the multitude of the terrible ones
H4671 H5674 H1995 H6184

בְּמִלְחָמָה כַּאֲבָלָק יְהִי הֵן
H1961 yea it shall be at an instant suddenly
H6621 H6597

Additional Cross-References

1 Thessalonians 5:3 (Parallel theme): For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape.

Isaiah 30:13 (Parallel theme): Therefore this iniquity shall be to you as a breach ready to fall, swelling out in a high wall, whose breaking cometh suddenly at an instant.

Isaiah 37:36 (Parallel theme): Then the angel of the LORD went forth, and smote in the camp of the Assyrians a hundred and fourscore and five thousand: and when they arose early in the morning, behold, they were all dead corpses.

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